A Man of LITTLE FAITH

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

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THE AUTHOR

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

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MAN OF LITTLE FAITH

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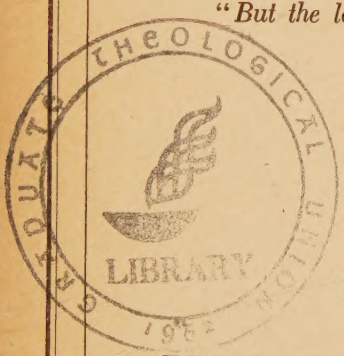
By

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

"But the laborers are few."



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A Man of Little Faith

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

THE REV. HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK, A.B., A.M., B.D., D.D.

AND

THE REV. HENRY SLOANE COFFIN, B.A., M.A., B.D., D.D.

"According to your faith, be it unto you."

921

"Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore opprest,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distrest;
Yet . . . . ."

SAMUEL JOHN STONE (1868)

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BOOK ONE; The Priest

BOOK ONE: The Priest

CHAPTER ONE

§1

BISHOP MEEKER, in episcopal robes and seated on his carved chair before the altar, spoke with that gravity which was never absent from him when he recited the words of the old ordinal:

"Do you think in your heart that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the Canons of this Church, to the Order and Ministry of Priesthood?"

The candidate's voice replied, sincerely clear and firm:

"I think it."

A good voice. The voice — or so the elder people in the congregation felt — of a born preacher.

"Are you persuaded — "

Through the east window poured warm sunlight. It took on those tints of the parti-colored figures there depicted, and made the candles wan.

" — persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all Doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith — "

Not since the funeral of its latest rector, a year ago, had St. John's arched roof covered so many people. Judge Averell and his wife and daughter Alice, of course — young Tom Averell sang in the choir — for the Judge was Senior Warden; old Hornaday also, as Junior Warden; but Celeste Raymond, too, the practical support of rival and ritualistic St. Alban's; Justine Dinwiddie, whose father was St. Alban's

priest, and everybody else in Doncaster not too definitely committed to some other form of worship was here: critical Methodists, yearning Baptists, sympathetic Lutherans — even little Isaac Rosenbaum, the Jew, because he possessed an unremitting interest in other people's religions, and Ernest Grigg, because he was interested in everything. Yet, though each came for his own reasons, the eyes of all had one focus: that young man who stood there before his Bishop.

They didn't know him, and they had caught only the merest glimpse of his round face as he was conducted toward the altar. The sole candidate, he had inevitably become the central figure of this ceremony.

" — faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined, out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach them nothing, as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture? "

" I am so persuaded, and have so determined, by God's grace."

§ 2

Sunday morning. There were other services being held in Doncaster, of course, though the attraction of the unusual service at St. John's had somewhat thinned attendance to them. Doncaster was even then more than the county-seat of a rich agricultural district: a thriving little city with several industries to attract workers and a history that began before the Revolution, which guarantees the value set upon churches by its employing-class.

In the First Presbyterian Church, — substantial, if not quite socially elect — Dr. Cameron, sallow and lantern-jawed, shook his bony right forefinger, along which his *r's* rolled forth against a large, if stolid, audience:

" An' sixthly in our text, note that wor-rd '*chosen.*' Let

the puir daft bodies from the deceived denawminations say what they mind to: '*Thou* knowest Abner came to deceive thee!' Whereas the oper-ration and witness o' the Holy Speerit is your ane assur-rance o' Salvation, yet assur-rance rests in the Divine choice o' this mon or that and no ither. It is founded on the solid rock o' the Sovereign God's eternal purpose, whereby He has pr-redestined some o' us to glory, and for the rest eter-rnal condemnation!"

To his flock at Trinity Reformed Church, the Rev. Herman T. Embick preached with less fire, but with as much conviction — a short, crisp man of bristling hair and quick speech. His congregation went to hear him because their parents had gone to hear his predecessor, and because they admired his bluntness.

"If you vant Mystery, gonsider de mystery of Gott's blan; but Suberstition iss de draitor in relitchen's own group. Dot Transsubstantiation of de Romish Gouncil of Trent and dot Gonsubstantiation of Martin Luther: where iss difference between dem? No difference iss — and so de drue Gristian rejects dem both."

It was, however, genuinely rapt hearers that heard their pastor in what Doncaster ever referred to simply as "Bethesda Baptist." He was preaching yet again the cardinal tenet of their sect:

"Look for it here." He shook his head over the tome spread open before him. "This Book: it don't *contain* the Word of Gawd, only; it *is* the Word of Gawd — and rightly translated and rightly interpreted, every word in it is Gawd's word. Then what does it teach about our subjects? Why, that baptism for believers — by immersion — that's a sacrament! But Baptism of infants? We Baptists haven't got time to listen to the churches that talk about Special Grace making a baby, who doesn't know its big toe from its little finger, capable of understanding — let alone believing —

the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ. You might as well baptize an ape or an idiot. The baptism of infants can't make them Gawd's regenerated children. It's what the highbrows would call a sacriligious futility!

" Now we'll all rise " — he appeared to lift his people by a gesture — " and, while the young folks who have confessed Jesus Christ approach the font, I'll ask you all to unite in singing — very softly — ' Just As I Am ': first the ladies' voices, then the male, verse by verse, through the hymn."

And at the Barnes Memorial M. E. Church the people were still vocally responsive. Their minister was a pugilist of the pulpit, and, as he pounded desk or Bible indifferently, so he struck out indiscriminately at all denominations save his own:

" . . . or the Episcopalians and Lutherans, who never did get more'n a mile off from Catholicism and have been crawling back that way ever since! "

" Ay-men! "

" If you go in a Reformed Church or a Presbyterian Church, you're liable to freeze to death on the Fourth o' July — "

" Ay — "

" . . . because Calvin's followers carry their Predestination to where it denies Sanctification! "

" — men! "

" Election's conditional! Predestination's conditional! God made His eternal decree — yes. But He made it only on condition that all who confess Jesus shall be saved! "

" Bless the Lord! ".

" What else did Jesus die on the cross for? Human nature's depraved; all but Free Will was restored to all by the ' Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' — That's where John Wesley put one over on John Calvin. Wesley taught God's truth of Inward Holiness."

" Glory to God! "

" It's not regeneration! " — Bang went the left fist upon the desk-edge. — " It's not justification! " — Bang went the right fist upon the Bible. — " And it's no attempt to adulterate God's power so that that power has to have human help — so that that power works only on a man after months and years of struggle. No! Struggle on our part is good; but " — the preacher lifted both clenched fists above his head — " this is the instant and omnipotent work of the Holy Ghost alone, and it frees you from sin and raises you to holiness ' in a moment of time ' and ' in the twinkling of an eye ' ! "

Together those fists crashed upon the volume of the Scriptures.

" Hallie-lule-yuh! "

§ 3

" Will you then," Bishop Meeker pursued at the Church of St. John the Divine, " give your faithful diligence — "

The congregation did wish it could get a good look at the candidate. Celeste Raymond — even then the *belle sauvage* and richest woman of Doncaster — frankly leaned far from side to side in wasted endeavor, making that turmoil which she never failed to create around her. Judge Averell's black eyebrows contracted into a single line under the snowdrift crowning his head — but he couldn't see through the back of the man whose face he wanted to study. To no better effect did Mrs. Averell forget how often she had been said to resemble a Martha Washington with the dignity of a Marie Antoinette. The candidate was in Doncaster because he wanted to be ordained in his own diocese; his home lay at its other end, but Bishop Meeker had got thus far, for a confirmation, when an attack of gout prevented farther progress: so here to the mountain came Mohammed. Weren't the foothills really to see him until he was a priest?

Tom Averell, the Senior Warden's chorister-son, was a soprano; he sat at the centre of one of the front choir-stalls and had been staring at the yellow hair and pretty, rebellious mouth of Justine Dinwiddie in the third pew from the chancel-steps: he had always known her; but now she was sure getting to be some skirt. Their eyes met: she blushed; he blushed until his freckles were extinguished, and he had to look away. Which doing, he could see a little of what the congregation wanted to see—at least the profile of the candidate.

Pleasant. Brown — brown hair; brown eyes. A nose somewhat thick, but strong. A robust figure. Only just beyond the age required for the rite about to be administered.

That was what Tom saw. What he knew that he saw expressed itself in the thought:

"More like a man'n a minister."

"Minister" — Bishop Meeker was even now using the word: "Will you then give your faithful diligence always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church hath received the same — "

Felton — John Felton, the candidate — had been no great student of dogma; but he unquestioningly accepted it as more or less amorphously taught him. Of course. "This Church": the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America — that was its legal name. When he was made a Deacon, he had signed a declaration: "I do believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, and I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America." He had never attended a service of any of the other sects — never thought long about them. All his life, when he said "the Church," he meant the Episcopal Church — when he said "Churchman," meant Episcopalian. How

did it receive its doctrine? Why, from God. Not "whence," but "how" — "receive" in the sense of "interpret" and "apply"? Well, there were the creeds and the catechism, the Thirty-Nine Articles and, as for discipline, the canons: some you went through in childhood at Sunday School, some in youth at the seminary. They were right; faith in their rightness was more important than perpetual study of them, intimate textual acquaintance with them, but they were certainly right.

". . . according to the Commandments of God; so that you may teach the people committed to your Cure and Charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same?"

Felton's serious gaze was fixed upon the Bishop, a big man whose impression of weight his wide lawn sleeves increased. He had a broad, ruddy face, hazel eyes, and mutton-chop whiskers turning gray; he wore a pectoral Cross and, on his right forefinger, an amethyst ring, the stone cut *en cabochon*.

John Felton answered:

"I will — by the help of the Lord."

"Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your Cures, as need shall require and occasion shall be given?"

The candidate said:

"I will, the Lord being my helper."

"Will you be diligent in Prayers, and in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside all study of the world and the flesh?"

Ah, would he not be glad to! The flesh, he was sure, had never seriously hampered him; but the world he had had, in a single sense, to study — that he might keep one flying pace beyond its relentless pursuit. He was born in the flight and

brought up to it; because it was a flight, he was an only child. He, who could not forget, recalled:

Both parents lovable failures, and failures well loved — the mother, who had a little come down in life and ceased not to remember that; the jubilant, just inefficient father, who, never having been up, was always on the verge of lifting his family by some fresh invention, which somehow wouldn't quite succeed. The material makeshifts, the paternal hopes. The father, seeking, eighteen hours daily, a future in his garret workshop; the mother, holding hard to a polite past wherewith her Episcopalianism formed the sole remaining link.

Johnnie delivered newspapers, solicited magazine-subscriptions, worked at regular jobs all summer and at jobs only somewhat less regular out of winter school-time, and he was brought up in Mrs. Felton's church. After high-school, he wanted to be a doctor, conceiving that at once dignified, lucrative and helpful; but there was not money enough, and, although an indefatigable worker at most things, he was scarcely so apt with text-books as to achieve a scholarship. Instead, in the church's boys' club debates, he evinced a precocious gift of eloquence; pious parishioners offered to pay part of his way through the theological seminary: thither he went, and casual employments made up the otherwise lacking money.

Felton, Sr., regarded Holy Orders for his son as a gentlemanlike profession that need not be practised after the pending invention was perfected; Mrs. Felton, besides considering the opportunity as a good churchwoman should, saw it both as a recapture by her child of that state of life to which she had been called, and as his lifelong assurance of salary or pension. Believe? Of course Johnnie believed. To his mother the question never presented itself, nor to her boy. He would have said he believed so thoroughly that he did

not have to think much about the problems of belief: the Church was the institution of God; what it decreed need not be too deeply analyzed, since what it decreed must be right.

He behaved well, took what anywhere else would have been called elocution-prizes, generally got passing-marks in his other studies, played good tennis and proved spectacular on baseball and football teams. His father died and left an insurance contracted in the first May-days of marriage; by scraping, Mrs. Felton had somehow kept up the premiums and kept down the loans: on what was bequeathed her she could just live — but that was counting the doctor's bills, for, when she no more possessed a husband to support, she confessed herself the invalid she had long been — and Johnnie would soon be in a position to "help out."

Soon? The event was almost here! He had graduated; he became a deacon; now — today — he was to be ordained a priest, one of God's laborers: a parish would follow, and he would be at work in the vineyard.

It was of all this that Felton thought, and of the usefulness of the life ahead of him:

"I will endeavor so to do, the Lord being my helper." —

Tom Averell was thinking: "Why'n't they cut it short?"

Justine Dinwiddie was thinking: "Tom'll be wearing a tuxedo soon."

What smiling Ernest Grigg thought, as he stroked his neat Vandyck beard, cocked his shining bald head and opened and shut his birdlike eyes, none guessed; for wealthy Mr. Grigg was one of those men with whom everybody is acquainted, but whom nobody knows. However, nearly all the rest of the congregation wished they could see the candidate's face — and Judge Averell looked solemn, and his wife devout, and old G. G. Hornaday's equine face drew down its lips farther than ever, while Celeste Raymond, the *belle sauvage*, stretched her black head over the pew in front of

her, and little Ike Rosenbaum stepped out and stood atiptoe in the aisle.

Only Alice, the Judge's daughter, seemed more conscious of the impending event than of the person who was to be its object. She sat beside her parents, clasping in her lap hands capable, but fine. Her hair was blue-black, and she wore it in an Italian fashion, parted at the centre and drawn down over her ears. Her skin of pink-and-olive would have completed the Latin effect, except that her wide eyes with dark pupils were gray. While now a young girl, she was made for a second glance by that note of contrast; yet herself she looked not so much at Bishop, assisting clergy and candidate as she looked, ecstacised, for the thing that was to be done.

It drew near. The three succeeding questions were put and answered; the promises made, the prayer recited. At a gesture of the hand bearing the episcopal amethyst, Felton knelt. It drew very near, she knew: that imposition of palms which — descending through the era's centuries, spiritual generation by spiritual generation — came in unbroken line from the Apostles ordained of Christ, and alone, conferred by one of their succeeding Bishops, made of a man a priest.

Faith feeds only on mystery — starves without it, a logical and psychological necessity. Not a specific mystery, yet a mystery. The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Mass of Pius V., Calvin's " Aliment of life eternal," Wesley's " Immediate Influence," the " Movement of the Spirit " at a Quaker Meeting: any one may serve for some, but some one must. This at least Alice Averell vaguely felt among the congregation, and, close to the altar, completer knowledge was written on the ascetic face of Father Brethwald Dinwiddie, rector of St. Alban's, in his High Church vestments; the presentor's attitude — although he was robed as a Low

Churchman ought to be — expressed it, and Bishop Meeker's voice:

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire — "

In the response, no voice was more fervent than Ike Rosenbaum's.

§ 4

At St. Thomas's Lutheran Church, the Rev. Edgar Katz, with nervous movements and brisk voice, read one of the many Communion Services of his sect.

In Catholic St. Peter's on Earl Street, Father Barry's head was hidden by the rise of his stiffly embroidered chasuble as he bent above the altar, whispering:

"*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum.*"

Far out beyond the factories, at the edge of town, where the fields began, stood yet another church crowned by three queer cupolas of onion-shape, whose gilt the dust from nearby chimneys had sadly tarnished. Its shoddy interior was full of poor pictures, of flaming candles. There were no pews. Its sanctuary was half-concealed by a grill, and before this the Russian and Greek, the Bulgar and Serb workers from the mills knelt, their foreheads to the floor, in a crowded company.

Thus they prostrated themselves; but against a pillar leaned a stranger whom curiosity had prompted here, a sallow man whose pose was the sole negligent thing about him. The eyes of all the worshippers were against the tiles; the eyes of this man were upon one of the girl worshippers, bent low immediately before him.

"Going to be a peach," he said.

From behind that grill, which formed the *ikonostas* came the low voice of invisible Father Dimitri, speaking archaic Slavonic:

". . . And make this bread the precious Body of Thy

Christ . . . and that which is in this cup the precious Blood of Thy Christ . . . changing them by Thy Holy Spirit! "

§ 5

In St. John's, clergy and people sang the last response of the *Veni Creator Spiritus,* and Bishop Meeker prayed.

The mystery: Felton himself became acutely conscious that he needed it — sought the sense of the occult.

He thought about his little mother, too feeble to journey with him here and see the consummation of her heart's desire; how he had fondled her thin hands on bidding her goodbye, and kissed the lids of her dim eyes in which tears, not all of happiness, were shining. He thought of the theory of Apostolic Succession: he had accepted that as he accepted all other theories taught at the seminary. And then he heard the Bishop — felt upon his lowered head the pressure of trembling hands.

Within him something said:

" Now! "

Above him, Bishop Meeker said:

" Receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained — "

Felton had it at last, that sense of mystery! He willed it, and the very words that he heard gave his will its otherwise wanting warrant: their choosing, the solemn music of them. In the average man's life, not sleep and waking and such great miracles that seem so small, but the realized ceremonial mysteries — his confirmation as a boy; his wedding as a man; a death watched, yet unseen — these, artificially or naturally, have their instants of either transport or prescience, a clear sanity inspiredly intense, when his soul stands beside his body and governs it, because his soul has become

at once a pure channel for immaterial forces and a part of them. Thus Felton now.

Bishop Meeker —or was it Bishop Meeker? — concluded:

" . . . And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of His Holy Sacraments — in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

A Bible in his hands, token of his right to preach its contents, Felton repeated, with all the rest, the Creed of Nicaea:

" I believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God; . . . being of one substance with the Father; . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary. . . . He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again . . . and ascended into Heaven — "

And that remainder which an emperor changed for western Europe, in defiance of authority. . . .

§ 6

The Communion Service had ended, the congregation could see Felton now: his abundant brown hair and alert brown eyes, his smiling lips, his robust figure, youthful, but fashioned for strength.

Old Gee-Gee Hornaday's face was that of a horse in the throes of decision; Ernest Grigg swung up his pointed beard, and his birdlike glance was merry; but Ike Rosenbaum beamed, and Judge Averell nudged his wife, who nodded her large white head. Their daughter, unnoted by them as a well brought-up daughter safely may remain unnoted — looked at the new priest with grave, gray glance.

The Judge leaned across the aisle toward the Junior Warden's pew:

" He ought to do."

"Um. We'll see," said Hornaday.

Tom winked at Justine. Justine winked at Tom — and then blushed.

"This Mr. Felton's almost handsome," thought the beautiful red-and-black, Celeste Raymond. — "He is handsome," she added a moment later.

"Well, Ikey," asked Ernest Grigg, "what do you think of it all?"

"It's pretty, ain't it?" said Ikey Rosenbaum.

Felton himself saw the girl Alice and thought what a charming person she would some day be; but his brain was very much preöccupied. He was framing in his mind the telegram that he would immediately dispatch to his mother:

"Ordained. Love.
JOHNNIE."

CHAPTER TWO

§ 1

THE Judge was coming in at the vestry-door as the clergy, service over, tried to come out of it. He was shaking Felton's unsteady hand. Of what was said the new priest, still moved by his recent experience, caught at first but key-phrases:

"... just we men-folk ... my car is outside ... and have a bite of lunch with us."

Judge Averell's girth, his florid face and the gleam in his blue eyes suggested that the bite would be ample and good. He wore a black cutaway coat and white spats and a red tie.

Felton looked at his ecclesiastical superior, a somewhat different person from that lately revealed in the chancel: a large, plump person in High-Church gaiters and Low-Church views, corruscating a Broad-Church tolerance. The Bishop nodded.

"Thank you," said Felton. "I must send a telegram first —"

"My car is outside," the Judge repeated; and it was now plain that, far from speaking in curtailed sentences, he either affected the verbal traditions of his place on the bench or was affected by them — "We pass a telegraph-office on our way to my home."

The clergyman that had presented Felton for ordination must catch a one o'clock train; Father Dinwiddie of St. Alban's implied, with disapproving politeness, that, although he broke his fast after Holy Communion, he did not leap

from abstinence to feasting. The Bishop, however, went along, and so did lantern-jawed G. G. Hornaday.

§ 2

The house of Judge Sherwood Averell is nominally on Henrietta Street, the best street in Doncaster; but it stands well back from that pleasant thoroughfare, whence trolley-cars are banned, and is approached by a curving driveway between lawns, which cast-iron statues embellish. It is a square brick house bearing a square cupola. In its still Eighteen-Eighty parlor, the party was met by Mrs. Averell, who had hurriedly preceded them and who now, having received them with an odd blending of her social importance and a deference to the Bishop's episcopal character, disappeared and was no more seen.

"Would you gentlemen care to wash your hands?" the Judge inquired. He ran one of his own hands over his waving white hair.

As Bishop Meeker wouldn't, nobody would.

"Then Hornaday and I will go and mix the cocktails."

"M'yes," agreed Hornaday, as if he mistrusted the mission.

"Only a little sherry and bitters for me," the Bishop, with raised ring-finger, admonished. "And for our young friend here." He smiled at Felton. "That is my official advice to you. Remember St. Cyprian: *Ecclesia est in episcopo*."

They were left alone.

Felton felt some embarrassment. He looked at a wide canvas over the mantlepiece above the hot-air heater — an Annunciation after the manner of Murillo just before that artist passed into his vaporous period. It boasted a very ornate frame.

"Is this a Titian?" Felton asked.

"The Judge," said the Bishop, "thinks it is a Murillo. He bought it during his only trip to Europe. I do not undeceive him." He had walked over to the rug before the dormant heater. Here he displaced his subordinate, turned his back upon the picture, settled himself into his Episcopal clothes — which he nevertheless wore always to admiration — and, with hands clasped behind him, began gently to shift his weight from one gaitered leg to the other and back again. "You don't know Doncaster?"

"No, sir."

"A quite, quite typical town." There were tiny purple veins visible in Bishop Meeker's cheeks; out of vestments, he did not look nearly so well a man as he looked in them. "Very American," said he.

Felton, more to make conversation than anything else, remarked that he had heard something of a proportionately large Slavonic and Near Eastern population.

"Ye-es." Bishop Meeker managed to purse his wide, thick lips. "But they go to their own church — that Eastern Orthodox in the fields. And of course the Italians and Irish are Catholics. I was thinking of the Americans. There are vast opportunities for a splendid work here, Felton."

"There are two Episcopal Churches," said the new priest, and wondered why his cheeks burned.

"Eh? Oh, well, strictly between us, St. Alban's isn't much more than a certain very charming lady's chapel-of-ease — quite all right, of course, but rather *recherché:* the lady in question inherited the biggest mills in town. On the other hand, here's St. John's without a rector — a little amorphous, a little hard to please, but splendidly inclusive, and solid, Felton: solid. Whatever there is in Doncaster that Miss Raymond of St. Alban's didn't inherit, our friends the Judge and Mr. Hornaday have acquired — except Ernest

Grigg's share: that's larger than either of theirs — or both put together, for that matter — but then Grigg doesn't belong anywhere — not to any church, I mean." The Bishop glanced good-naturedly down his nose. "This parish carries a salary of three thousand, with the rectory; and of course there are the perquisites: practically all the congregation's well-to-do."

Felton thought about his mother.

"Vast opportunities for a splendid work," Bishop Meeker repeated, twisting now his pectoral Cross. "The people are too well-to-do. They can have too many comforts, and so they think they must have them, to the detriment of their religious life. They'd rather pay than pray. On Sundays, they mail checks to the rector and motor to the country-club. St. John's needs an energetic man with magnetism."

Felton's color deepened.

"And lastly," the superior pursued: "a great deal of tact. The wonderful thing about our branch of the Church Universal, Felton, is her comprehensiveness. Think how she houses ritualists and evangelicals under her wide roof! Well, St. John's is a microcosm of the Episcopal Church: broad churchmen and low churchmen, and some rather high. The really high of course go to Dinwiddie at St. Alban's, but they're not many as I said. The point is that the man at St. John's would have to steer a way between conflicting opinions; but if he was the right man — if he had tact and magnetism and energy — without sacrificing any fundamentals, he could win the people of this parish back to active spiritual existence. They're sadly comatose now. — Hello, Judge! I began to think you and Hornaday were drinking without us."

The Judge had come in with the cocktails and sherry, Hornaday behind him.

"Somebody," Judge Averell complained, "mislaid the

vermouth. The servant-problem in our country is becoming more involved every year."

"So you discussed that?"

"M'yes," said Hornaday, thrusting out his long chin. "What were you talking about, Bishop?"

Bishop Meeker laughed. "When I used to be a missionary among the cracker-whites in North Carolina, they had a story that might answer your question. A colored fellow came to a lawyer and asked for a '*de*-vorce' from his wife. 'Dat woman o' mine,' he said, 'she des' talk — talk — TALK, night en' day. Ah cayn't git no res', 'cause dat talk's a-drivin' me clean crazy.' So the lawyer asked him what she talked about. The old colored fellow just shook his head. He said: 'I dunno what she talks about: she don' say!'"

The Bishop mimicked excellently the negro dialect and, like most men, enjoyed doing what he did well. Felton momentarily wondered whether high ecclesiastics ought to joke, but dismissed the doubt as silly; he had that boyish laugh, very hearty, which the anecdotist appreciates. Even Hornaday smiled. The Judge was still chuckling while he led their way to the badly lighted dining-room.

There was late turkey and early corn-on-the-cob. There were onions stewed in cream, and peas; celery, and mashed potatoes upon which cataracts of giblet-gravy poured. Everybody ate heavily from the start, except Felton, who was too nervous, but whom his three table-companions urged continually to food. Bishop Meeker was easy of manner without losing dignity in the eyes of his friends; he put forth more negro stories over the iced tea, and showed himself as the joyful prelate that can be both episcopal and man-of-the-world. Judge Averell talked at some length, though not dully, about the moral conditions of Doncaster as mirrored in his court; but Hornaday, although as expert a trencher-

man as most lank persons, kept his sombre eyes on the younger cleric and confined his conversation to " M'yes " and " M'no."

It was disconcerting, yet by the time the ice-cream had been served, Felton began to find himself and wished he had eaten more. He first answered freely inquiries about the seminary, then, without trespass upon either Bishop or Judge, fell into little narratives of his earlier life, which he told modestly, unconscious of their pathos, but with a talent for picture-making and a gift in words. His round face glowed, his brown eyes shone; there were dimples when he smiled. He was not too far from boyhood to be near to Heaven.

" Married? " Hornaday had broken into sudden verbal sound.

Felton finally understood. " I have my mother," he replied simply.

The Judge nodded approval.

" Um." Hornaday relapsed.

" Quite as it should be. You know what one of the greatest Bishops of Connecticut used to say." It was Bishop Meeker who repeated it, from behind a large cigar. " He used to say that a man no sooner got a cassock than he wanted a petticoat," — The proper laugh went 'round. — " And I am glad to see you smoke, Felton. Men who don't smoke and men who get up early in the morning are liable to the sin of self-righteousness."

" But I'm always up at six," said the young man.

Although Judge Averell chuckled at this naïvety, he turned to Hornaday as if the forthcoming suggestion were really spontaneous:

" We haven't a supply for next Sunday, have we? How about getting Mr. Felton to preach? "

" M-m-m." Hornaday's eyes had not shifted. — " M'yes."

§ 3

" I suppose you know what this invitation implies? " whispered Bishop Meeker as they returned to the parlor.

Felton's heart beat thunderously. He had made a good impression. The request for a sermon meant a trial: he knew that, if he preached well and otherwise pleased the rest of the vestry, he would be considered for a " call " to St. John's.

" What would you suggest as a subject? " he asked as he bowed mute answer to the Bishop's question.

" Eh? — Why, something sound, but uncontroversial." Bishop Meeker raised his jovial voice. " Felton wants a topic for his sermon, gentlemen."

That topic, as it happened, was supplied by a newcomer. Ernest Grigg, until now ignorant that there were dinner-guests present, had strolled over for his Sunday afternoon religious-quarrel with the Judge.

Grigg was a short man, well advanced in years and proud because he did not look it: that was why he used in full his youthful name of Ernest. He had inherited and guarded rosy cheeks; he bought in England his clothes of the usual good British material and the usual bad British fit. His cocked bald head was like a beacon; he smiled above his Vandyck beard and out of his birdlike eyes.

" Why not make it Good Works in relation to Faith? " he inquired, shaking hands with the Bishop and nodding acknowledgement to the latter's presentation of Felton. " That's what puzzles us agnostics about you Christians: we'd think more of you if we heard less of your civil wars and saw more of your fruits of the Spirit."

Most people took Mr. Grigg with a kindly seriousness, even when they disagreed with him, which was frequently: his always avowed agnosticism was almost friendly, and

he was a man of power in Doncaster. Bishop Meeker assented.

" You're right, Grigg, and so was St. Paul: we forget the parable of the talents and quarrel too much before you unbelievers." He turned to the pair of vestrymen: " Isn't that so, gentlemen? "

" M'yes," said Hornaday.

" We are always ready to take issue with the unbelievers, too," chuckled the Judge. " Grigg finds that out from me nearly every Sunday."

" On the way up here," Grigg explained, " I met Katz — he's the Lutheran pastor, Mr. Felton — and Embick — he's the Reformed Minister. Katz was going for Embick because somebody'd told him Embick had called the Lutheran's Communion-doctrine ' Consubstantiation,' and Katz said it was the wrong term — that what they believed was a Real Presence, ' in, under and with.' I wanted to know how the Presence made Katz more charitable to Embick, however it got there, and how Embick's celebration of his Lord's Supper made Embick more charitable to Katz."

" The Devil can cite theology, for his purpose," Bishop Meeker interposed. " Take Faith and Works for your topic, Felton." — And the good ecclesiastic told a negro-story.

§ 4

To what was uppermost in his mind, he did not come back until, an hour later, the party was about to break up. Then, with an apologetic nod at the rest of the company, he drew into one corner the man he had that morning ordained.

" I should like to see you get this call," said the Bishop.

" Thank you, sir," said Felton. " Of course I want it."

" Then just be yourself." While, with episcopal ring aflash, Bishop Meeker fondled his pectoral Cross, he put his

left arm around the young fellow's shoulders. "Just be to everybody as you were to Averell and Hornaday here. I believe you are the right man for the place. Naturally, I have been informed of your seminary record. You have the preacher's gift, the Dean told me: preach your best sermon, and don't be nervous."

"I'll try."

"I'm sure of that. There's one piece of advice that I always give a young fellow. Youth likes to admonish; but remember that admonishing is only one of the ways to win people to the Church and that it's useful only when it is a clear duty. I used to know an old darkey who said: 'Vinegar's right 'nough on pigs' feet, but it suttenly tek's molasses to ketch flies.' He was right, too. Employ tact: energy is futile without it, and a lack of it is fatal to any magnetism. Remember what I said about this congregation's neglect of its religious duties, but don't make use of it until the congregation is your congregation. If you repel them at first, you will get no second chance to please them."

§ 5

His gout was gone, and he was soon going. The Judge and the Judge's car would take the Bishop to the station; Junior Warden Hornaday evidently preferred to walk to his own house alone — he had been so long a bachelor that he liked loneliness — so it was Grigg that, when the party broke up, accompanied Felton to his hotel, where he had decided to remain until the sermon should be prepared and delivered. The young man felt a certain timidity in the presence of this mature agnostic, but Grigg put him at his ease:

"You mustn't take my digs at the Bishop too seriously: we're old friends, Meeker and I. When you reach my age, you'll find intellectual differences the firmest ground for friendship."

" I see," said Felton, although he didn't.

" Besides," Grigg pursued, " it was the Judge I'd come over to fight. I didn't know Meeker was there. I knew he wasn't stopping at the Averells' because he was afraid of offending Celeste Raymond, and I knew he wasn't stopping at Celeste Raymond's because he's afraid of Celeste; so I thought he was at Hornaday's and would take his dinner where he was visiting. It turns out the Prestons put him up."

" Yes? " Felton was thinking of something else. " What do you mean about his being afraid of somebody? "

" Celeste Raymond? Well, you see, when Celeste got to the marrying age a year or two ago, the Bishop's wife was dying. Celeste's used to having her own way and thought it might be nice to have a husband who was a Bishop: she rather went for Meeker, and he thought it a bit premature. Then Mrs. Meeker got wind of it and recovered. Understand? "

" Who is Miss Raymond? " Felton asked uncomfortably.

" She's a young woman with more money and more will than anybody in this diocese. The day'll come when she can run its whole delegation in a general Convention. Didn't you see her at church this morning? That dark girl in one of the front pews: she has jet black hair and a red mouth, and her clothes — ! Half-French, half-American; you couldn't have missed her."

" I'm afraid I wasn't looking at the congregation." Then Felton feared that this might seem a manifestation of the sin of self-righteousness lately mentioned by his Bishop: " That is — "

" Oh, it's all right! It was my fault. Of course you weren't thinking of the congregation. It was quite proper you shouldn't be, and quite wrong of me to assume you were. Still " — Grigg lit a cigar — " Celeste'll call herself to your

attention one of these days: that's her way. And you'll look — she's worth it."

"I'll only be here over next Sunday."

"Time enough for Celeste. And there'll be still more time when you come back — when you've got the regular job at St. John's."

A disconcerting little man, after all!

"I'd call that premature," Felton smilingly protested.

"You'll get it, anyhow," said Grigg. He shut and opened again his sharp little eyes. "See if you don't."

CHAPTER THREE

§1

FELTON did want the call to St. John's. There was here the chance both to do a good work and, out of the reward for that good work done, to help his mother. One verse from First Epistle to the Bishop of Ephesus had long been clearly written in his mind: "If he provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Felton's own house was his mother.

So he worked hard at his sermon: too hard to see much of Doncaster or any of that Celeste whom Grigg had said he would see. Most of the daylight he spent in thinking about what he was to say; night-long, the lower electric lamp in that hotel-room shone upon his brown head bowed above the pile of theme-paper on the tiny table, while his inkstained fingers now drove the pen along faintly blue lines and now tore up what had been done, and began to do it over and over again. He must get it finished and well finished, then learn it by heart and finally rehearse its delivery through each detail of tone and gesture.

One walk, however, he did sometimes take by twilight. It led past old red brick St. John's and the encircling parish burying-ground, where the congregation's older families owned lots and wherein fresh graves were even yet occasionally squeezed — past that and the neighboring rectory, a house plainly planned for comfort and built for peace. This room with its bow-window thrust into the churchyard: there

was the perfect study for a rector, close to his place of worship, among those monuments to faithful souls at rest, and yet easy of access for his parishoners. . . .

Felton was tired this Thursday evening. He leaned against the iron rails of the cemetery-fence while he looked toward the bow-window.

Just as he turned away, the street-lamps flowered into sudden illumination. Their rays bathed his pleasant and earnest face. They dazzled him: he did not note the passage of a large limousine motor-car.

§ 2

Celeste Raymond was a trifle more observant: here was that newly-made priest again. He was good-looking! Had she not been too occupied with the man seated beside her, she still would have called Felton handsome.

" Hope he keeps his beauty," said Courtlandt Litchfield. " Beauty's an asset in the Church. Haven't you noticed? All successful preachers — nice to look at. Not a face in the House of Bishops that didn't start out so. Not saying it's cause and effect, only there's the fact."

By his own implicit test, Litchfield would not have succeeded in the Episcopal ministry, but he had a certain distinction and an air foreign to Doncaster. Sallow he was; his eyes were green, and his lips, under their waxed moustaches, were almost as red as those of his liberally rouged companion. Nevertheless, one would remember him if simply because of the impression that he granted of being able to be superiorly at home anywhere.

Celeste felt it to the exclusion of all deficiencies. For her part, her declaration was sincere:

" It's a pity you didn't study for the Church! "

" Meaning I'm a poor lawyer? "

" Meaning you'd have been a bishop."

" But I am a poor lawyer, Miss Raymond. Attended to this reörganization of your company all right, of course. Anybody could. But I couldn't do much more." Litchfield thrust his hands deep into his trouser-pockets and leaned negligently against the tonneau's cushions, without disturbing the perfection of his clothes. " My father was a good lawyer — for New York. Now the firm of Litchfield & Loeb — all Loeb and no Litchfield."

" I don't believe that."

" Ask my wife."

Celeste looked away. " I didn't know you had one."

" Only know it myself now and then. Loeb does, though." Litchfield laughed quietly. " Here's the station — and there's the train." He got out of the automobile; while the chauffeur carried a pair of alligator-hide suit-cases under the shadows of the arched train-shed, Litchfield reached upward and took the jeweled hand that Celeste gave him. " Been very good to me. Hope I may have a chance to repay, next time you come over."

" Thanks." The woman's face was hidden. " I would like to meet your wife."

" Oh, but I meant a chance to repay kindness with kindness! — Good-bye."

He bent — he was gone. He had kissed Celeste's hand. People didn't kiss hands in Doncaster.

§ 3

Celeste Raymond could have gone into her mill and worked at the rolls, entered the office and kept the books, and she was none of those employers who take no personal concern in their employees. She knew not only the processes and finances of her property: she knew her workers and her

workers' families; those whom she did not address by their Christian names she addressed by their last. She considered her responsibilities as extending into the homes which the wages she paid supported, and her interest in an individual, if sporadic, was inversely strong. Because of one such interest she had herself driven from the station to the modest rectory of St. Alban's.

"Father Brethwald," she announced to the priest, "I've got just ten minutes: tell me all about the religion of these Greeks and Russians."

A spare person, Dr. Brethwald Dinwiddie, with his ascetic face and kindly smile. A widower, he nevertheless resembled Cardinal Newman — but then he had been a widower for fifteen years. He was named for the eighth Archbishop of Canterbury; called Justine, his pretty rebel of a daughter, after the fourth Primate, and had easily persuaded Celeste to name his church for Britain's protomartyr. Rubbing clasped hands together, he permitted a pale gleam to enter his deep-set eyes:

"I'm afraid that's rather a long subject for a short talk."

"I'm going to give a dinner," Celeste explained. The room was small and untidy; well-worn books lined its every side and cluttered the floor and the writing-table in the centre; there were some religious pictures on the walls above the bookcases — photographs of Italian art, mostly — and, facing the desk, hung a Crucifix carved according to Eastern tradition, the feet not crossed. Celeste herself was orderly; she would speak to Father Brethwald about his bad housekeeping, when she was not too busy. Naturally, that wild Justine wouldn't care for the place. "And I must dress," the châtelaine of St. Alban's concluded: "so I can't wait. Just condense it. Are they Catholics?"

"As we are. They are not Roman Catholics. You have heard me preach, perhaps too often, on how our Anglican

Faith has come down uninterruptedly from the primitive Church — "

"I want to know about these foreigners."

Father Brethwald put up a thin palm. "I was on the point of saying: in the sense of that descent, they are at one with us. They have never moved from the position occupied by the undivided Church — even their Liturgy dates from Three or Four Hundred, and it is only an abbreviation of an older, apostolic, service. Rome seceded from the undivided Church and left them there — where they have remained until today. They — "

"Do they believe in the Pope? "

"On the contrary, they never considered him as anything but the Bishop of Rome, and when, in the early days, he set up his claim as Christ's vicar, they excommunicated him. Ever since, they've regarded Rome as Schismatic."

"A lot of them have got jobs in my mills lately. They're good workers and never make any trouble. But there's something queer about their religion."

"They have not changed since the Seventh Oecumenical Council, the Second Council of Nicaea, which was the last really universal council of Christendom, because all the later represented only one division of the Faith. Like us — "

"If we think they're right — "

"We do. They are sadly lax concerning the remarriage of divorced persons, but there is no question as to the purity of their faith, and even Rome admits the validity of their Orders. If an Anglican or Roman Catholic received absolution from an Orthodox priest, the penitent would be truly absolved — we freely acknowledge them."

"Then why don't they ever come to our church? "

"Because they are very conservative. One of their Patriarchs has said that the Anglican priesthood is as valid as Rome's; but all their Patriarchs must agree to make that

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generally binding on them." Again Father Brethwald's deep eyes smiled. "As a Church, they are not so sure of our Orders as we are of theirs."

It sufficed Celeste. She drew her unnecessary furs around her.

"I like that," she said — "I don't think!"

§ 4

In his comfortless hotel-room, Felton found pink-and-gray Ernest Grigg seated behind the table and a screen of good cigar-smoke.

"I just dropped in to see how the sermon was getting on."

Felton thanked him.

"And you'd left your notes all over the place: I took the liberty of looking at one or two. I hope you don't mind."

Their author did, but did not say so.

"If I were you," said Grigg, cocking his head above a chosen sheet of paper, "I'd put more emphasis on the Faith than on the Works. Gee-Gee Hornaday'll like the faith; as for the works — well, you're still an outsider, you know, and we Doncastrians are a bit touchy when it comes to outsiders."

The Bishop had implied as much. Felton's retort stopped short of utterance.

"I've been talking to Hornaday and the Judge and the Prestons," continued Grigg. "They're all for you, so far. — Oh, you'll get the call! See if you don't."

§ 5

On Friday afternoon, Tom Averell came out of school, as usual, with a group of his boy friends. He hurried among them down the gravel-covered walk, under twin rows of reddening maples. At the gate, however, he paused.

"Gee!" he said; "I fergot somethin'. I gotta go back."

But his companions had all week been watching him. Duckie Preston winked at Biff Long, and Biff grinned. Charley Schwartz, as captain of the school football-team, was severe:

"Cut that out, Tom. We're late for practice, now. Ain't old Knuckles' clock always slow?"

"I'll be right back," said Tom.

"What'd you ferget?" asked Duckie.

"Somethin'."

Duckie winked again. Biff, who played centre, said:

"Aw, what's the use? We know Somethin's name."

A crimson flood submerged Tom's freckles. He shook off his captain's detaining hand and confronted Biff:

"Whatcha mean?"

"It's a girl."

"It ain't."

Biff was the larger. He had broad shoulders and long arms; the fact that he lacked all front teeth worth mentioning added terror to his grin. "Call me a liar, will you? It's Jus' Dinwiddie."

"You're a liar!" yelled Tom. He knew he would get the worst of it, but his fist smashed into that toothless grin.

Schwartz, in his official capacity, made a pretense at interference: he was too late, and his heart was not in the task. The struggling pair flung him back against a swaying circle of delighted and impartially encouraging spectators. At its centre, the combatants rolled over and over, a tangle of flying legs and thrashing arms.

"Give it to him, Biffy!"

"Soak him, Tom!"

Biff gave it to him, coming out on top. He sat upon his supine companion, whose elbows Long's knees skilfully imprisoned.

" Am I a liar? "

Tom was helpless, but he said " Yes."

Biff raised a fist.

" Aw, you daresn't hit him now! " Duckie protested.

" Well, he's gotta take that back."

The brief amusement being over, Schwartz reasserted authority. " Take it back, Tom. — Get offen him, Biff."

" No," said young Averell.

" He's gotta take it back first," Long insisted.

Resourceful Duckie solved the puzzle. He had instigated the fight; he could afford to stop it short of assassination:

" If you'll get offen him, he'll take it back."

No response. Duckie looked over his shoulder.

" Gee! " he lied: " Here comes Knuckles! "

At mention of the teacher's nickname, Duckie darted through the gate. All the others, except Tom, followed him, Biff not the last of them.

The strategem had succeeded. Tom was alone.

§ 6

He got up. When quite sure that nobody observed him, he wiped the blood from his face upon a handkerchief already not immaculate, and the grime from his hands. Then he walked to the school-building, circled it, hurried past straggling girl-pupils and, after turning a few corners, came upon Justine Dinwiddie, waiting in an alley, as the note that he had tossed to her desk an hour since instructed her to do.

She tossed her yellow hair. " I'm only here 'cause I got an errand up street."

" Aw right. I gotta go to team-practice in a couple o' minutes, but I'll go 'long with you first."

She made no movement. " You're late," she pouted.

"I know it."

"I was just startin' away."

Tom regarded the pretty rebel — then looked hurriedly elsewhere. "Biff Long tried to stop me."

"Gosh! — Big Biff Long?"

"Uh-huh."

The violet eyes of Justine glowed with fierce expectancy. "O, Tom, did you lick him?"

"You betcha."

"Tom!"

"Aw, he's a big bluff."

They had really better talk about something else. "Listen, Jus': are you comin' to our church Sunday?"

No, she wasn't. She had been to St. John's for the ordination, and her father thought that enough contact with the broader Episcopalianism. "I don't believe you licked Biff."

"I did. — Can't you get your father to let you come?"

"Don't think so. Why d'you want me to?"

"I was down to the river yesterday, an' somebody'd left the key in the door o' the Mercers' boat-house. The Mercers always go to church on Sunday. If you told your father you were goin' to our church, an' I told my father I was goin' to yours, why, we could both go for a boat-ride. Will you?"

§ 7

There were, in fact, many plans for that Sunday being made throughout Doncaster. Felton, in his drab hotel-room, had thought upon the generalities of his faith and sincerely embodied the result of his composition; he stood before the dressing-table's faulty mirror and rehearsed the sermon's delivery with a true love for the sound of the words that commanded all his art and energy. Judge Averell held sundry

consultations with Hornaday and the other vestrymen. Mrs. Averell called on the head of the Ladies' Guild.

Nor had Celeste Raymond been idle.

§ 8

In the sooty mill-section of town, a girl named Menodora Zalokostas was talking on the treeless street with the priest Dimitrius Yisikoff. The daughter of a Greek father and a Russian mother, she combined in her already lovely body something of the race of each parent; her soft hair was very fair, but her eyes were large and liquid and brown; she had the features of a pure Hellene, the complexion of a Slav. But she had also the beginnings of a temperament finally to be fully acquired in the era and western land of her birth.

"I am going to do it, anyhow," she said in easy Russian — "anyhow, *Bátushka.*"

Father Dimitri might have been fifty or sixty. His beard, parted in the centre, was gray, his was the pale face of the tranquil visionary, his frock coat shone at its seams.

"If you are going to do it anyhow," said he in a voice meagre and low, "then I can do nothing."

"You do not want me to be always poor," the girl protested.

"How do I know?" the priest asked. "Myself, I have never been anything else. But I am sure that there are worse things."

"Her God is ours, too."

"Our Faith is the unbroken and uncorrupted."

"But what she believes we believe."

"Each of all the sects that have broken away from the Ancient Church retains one piece or another of that from which they have separated."

"But — I must!"

"I shall pray for you."

The girl bowed not her determination, but her fair head: "Bless me, Father."

The priest Dimitrius Vasilovitch raised his pale right hand. His thumb touched the bent third finger; he made above her the sign of the Cross.

She kissed his hand as he lowered it to the hands that she cupped for its reception. Without looking up, she hurried away.

§ 9

Her father's house — that is to say the two-story house that her family shared with two other families — stood not far off. When she entered its shabby living-room, where a time-blackened ikon hung high in the eastern corner, furred Celeste Raymond, all red-and-black, was talking to Zalokostas, who worked at the Raymond mills and had to listen:

"Now, Nick" — her mazed hearer's Christian name was Nicephoros — "Father Brethwald told me himself our church is just the same in the west as yours is in the east — Serbia and Montenegro and Rumania and Jerusalem and all those places. We're both against the Roman Catholics, and we're both Catholics — and we both come straight down from the Apostles without Rome, too. He says one of your popes or patriarchs said it was so. The only difference in our church is the Church in America. And you're living in America — and working in America — you're going to be an American citizen, and so you ought to bring up Dora like all the other American girls."

The gnarled hand of Nicephoros tugged at his moustache.

"Dere's many churches in America. Many Ort'odox Churches, too."

"They're not American, though. They use foreign lan-

guages — Bulgarian and Albanian, and I don't know what all. Father Brethwald told me."

"Some spe'k American — some day all will. Some day, when we haf' 'nough Ort'odox in America, we have American Ort'odox Church. Ort'odox Church make' good Americans." Above his high cheekbones, the Greek's eyes blinked. — "Your church, Miss Raymond: does it b'l'if de Holy Ghost proce'd' from de Fat'er, or from de Fat'er an' de Son?"

Dora stood in the doorway, crossing herself thrice from right to left, in Orthodox fashion, at sight of the ikon. Stout, mild-faced Mrs. Natalie Zalokostas, who had a snub nose and wore a shawl over her head, saved Celeste from answering:

"But all American kurls don' go your church, do dey, Miss Raymon'?"

"The nice ones do," said Celeste.

"Somebody say your church haf two churches in Doncaster here un' each one is all tiff'rent from ozzer."

"St. Alban's is the right one. — Come here, Dora. — I've been telling your parents about what we talked over this morning. Why in the world do you think I'm doing all this, Nick? It's only because I'm interested in your daughter and want to see her get on. If you let me make a real American out of her, I'll send her to the business-college and give her a good job in the mill-office — a good job: a stenographer's."

Celeste, in her small way, was a pioneer of that policy of militant Americanization destined to spring to full power during our country's participation in the World War.

CHAPTER FOUR

§ 1

"Lead, kindly Light. . . ."

SUNDAY again, come with amazing suddenness. St. John's choir, minus Tom Averell, sang Newman's hymn of faith, which Felton had chosen. The congregation joined with a will:

> ". . . Lead Thou me on!
> Keep Thou my feet! I do not ask to see
> The distant scene; one step enough for me."

As if in answer to this musical prayer, as if to expel forever that encircling gloom of doubt whereof Jemima Fourdrinier's boy wrote while a Cardinal-yet-to-be, sunlight swept once more through the east-window. It passed high above the green draperies of the altar and descended, over the chancel, to the crowded pews.

For also today the pews were crowded: everybody in Doncaster knew that the possibilities of a possible rector for St. John's were to be tested, and the test had an attraction greater than motor-trips or golf for the parishioners, more than certain other services for certain persons of other sects. Between the memorials to their dead ancestors stood and sang loudly surviving members of elder families; farther back stood, and sang even louder, the heads of newer families whose descendants would perhaps one day place here memo-

rials to them. Although Felton had not yet dared to look at these people, here were the Prestons; Judge Averell, his wife and Alice, inscrutable Hornaday and, prominent among the merely kindly curious, Grigg and Ikey Rosenbaum. Celeste Raymond's black hair and red lips and sumptuous apparel radiated from a front and borrowed pew; she preferred the ritualism of St. Alban's, but she, too, wanted to witness the trial: to Father Brethwald Dinwiddie's church — to her church — she had sent Dora Zalokostas as her representative.

So far, Felton had acquitted himself satisfactorily to the vestrymen, who had severally called upon him at his hotel. This morning, in a melodious voice that gave no betrayal of his nervousness and that showed a genuine passion for the beauty of the words, he had read well the service and both lessons, led in the recitation of the Apostles' Creed. Now, while the choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light," he moved to the pulpit.

"Amen!" — The congregation sat down.

He raised his right hand:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

The people rustlingly settled themselves for the real ordeal. Felton waited until there came silence. Then, easily, but impressively, he spoke the words of his painfully chosen text:

"In the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, in the eleventh chapter and the first verse, it is written: 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.'"

§ 2

The walls of the Barnes Memorial M. E. Church were rocking with its people's cry:

" And I shall see Him face to face! " . . .

To his Reformed congregation its Minister spoke upon the verse " Here are they that keep the faith." The Presbyterians joined in a rhymed paraphrase of the Twenty-Third Psalm, the Baptists in " Almost Persuaded."

Black gowned Mr. Katz preached a sermon calculated to refute the Rev. Herman T. Embick's last Sunday attack on the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The discourse was an appeal to faith as Luther, the former Augustinian-Eremite monk, conceived it.

Father Dinwiddie had said Morning Prayer at the mediaeval hour for Matins. Now he was softly repeating the Communion Service: " Give grace, O Heavenly Father, to all Bishops and other Ministers, that they may, both in their life and doctrine, set forth Thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer Thy Holy Sacraments."

Father Mochta Barry muttered: " *Ne respicas peccata mea, sed fidem Ecclesiae tuae.*"

And out there where the factories end and the fields begin, Father Dimitri recited: " For the peace of the whole world, the stability of God's holy churches, and for the union of them all, let us pray to the Lord."

§ 3

Felton, before he began to follow his text by his sermon, forced himself at last to look at his hearers. He had learned one way toward making a public speech effective: it was to study his audience and then, believing sincerely in what he had to say for their good, to feel — to make himself feel — a trifle their superior.

The Prestons: he knew them and could count on them. Rosenbaum: appreciative, but, as an alien in creed, negligi-

ble. Likewise Grigg, though encouraging. The equine face of Hornaday, doubtful. Both the elder Averells distinctly assets. This must be their daughter Alice, this young girl with the calm gray eyes that he had before noted: she was already stimulatingly attentive. That agile fellow in the foremost pew, who held a pencil poised and a stenographic note-book: a reporter from *The Star-and-Post,* of course — the preacher had never yet had anything recorded that he uttered, and felt at once the danger and the flattery of such a presence. And who was the daring woman in black and red? Was it — he guessed it was — the dominant Miss Raymond?

The first sound of his own voice reassured him. He spoke without so much as notes, for he had by heart what he had planned to say. His voice, only slightly nasal, carried well; he meant every word of what he had carefully prepared, and every word was the most sonorous that he could discover.

Sure of himself now, quite. His gestures were dramatic, but graceful. His brown eyes were wide; they were both earnest and content. The twin dimples deepened at his lip-corners when he smiled over the beautitudes of faith; when he spoke of the lack of it, his brown face darkened without any sacrifice of its comeliness:

" For ' faith is the substance of things hoped for ' ! "

§ 4

Mendora Zalokostas, at St. Alban's, was bewildered and uncomfortable. She had never before been inside any church except that one out there where the fields began, and this one was different from anything that she had dreamed a church could be.

Very different. That which must be the altar stood open to vulgar view, as much the eye's common property as the

lectern. There was an organ to produce the music — pleasant music, even impressive in its way, but mechanical: a thing of pipes and wires, made in a factory. No pictures anywhere; only carved images, the Stations of the Cross. And the people, every now and then, sat down! They did, really: not only old and ill people, but everybody — in the assumed presence of God! By Miss Raymond's directions, Dora had been shown into the Raymond front pew, the first pew on the Gospel side of the church, and was clearly expected to use its cushioned seat.

She didn't know how. Worse: the corresponding pew across the aisle was empty, and there was nobody to imitate — everybody else was behind her.

When did you rise? —

When did you kneel? —

When did you sit?

Once, something impelled her to look backward: she, only, was on her feet; all the rest of the people reposed themselves. Dora plumped down and for a long time refused to budge, no matter what the rest of the congregation might be doing.

Queer: the choir was in full view. Queerer: that priest wore vestments of which the outer ones were cut quite short. Dora fell the sudden prey of a horror founded upon some picture once seen in a casual newspaper. Could this St. Alban's be a Roman Catholic church, after all? Its ritual was " low " enough to be Roman Catholic, she was sure!

§ 5

Feelingly Felton analyzed his subject. Faith is dependence upon the veracity of another, and religious faith unquestioning assent to the revelation of Him " whose word cannot be broken." Faith is a gift, but a gift given to all, which needs only cultivation. Faith is a joy in sunshine and

a comfort among the shadows: to let it wither is to rob one's self.

He thought of his little mother: she would approve, if she were in this congregation. How was the congregation receiving his message?

He could see Hornaday's long upper teeth holding his lower lip, the whole face expressionless, but Ikey Rosenbaum was digging an elbow into Grigg, who nodded birdlike approbation; that woman in black-and-scarlet smiled. If this trio, being outsiders, did not count, the Prestons were plainly pleased. Nearly everybody. Judge Averell looked as if he might burst into applause, his wife's thought was written on her face: "Such a nice young man!" Best tribute of all, her gravely beautiful daughter bent forward intently, her gray eyes rapt. . . .

"'The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!'"

§ 6

The river ran between rolling hills. Here they were cloaked by sombre pine, there brilliant with fields that were warm patches on a robe of green.

"I'm glad we're here," said Tom Averell. "I hate church: a man in a sheet jus' gets up and talks, and you can't answer back."

"You ought to go to our church," Justine answered: "My father's sermons are never more'n fifteen minutes, and don't amount to a thing."

"I know," Tom too heartily agreed. "That's what everybody else says about your old man."

The current was strong; Tom, in the Mercers' boat, had to pull hard, and Justine mocked him from the stern.

"Biff Long could do it twice as fast."

"Yes he could — not!"

"He could so. I saw him do it once."

It isn't pleasant to labor at the oars while a girl behind you taunts your efforts; it is worse when she thrusts between your heaving shoulders the knife that looses jealousy. Tom half turned, and the boat swung at a right angle to its proper homeward course.

"Biff never took you to the island."

"Didn't he?"

"Well, when did he?"

"One day."

"This summer?"

"Last."

"He was down to Atlantic City all las' summer!"

"He wasn't."

"He was."

Caught in her fib, Justine wanted revenge. "Anyhow, I can row better than you can yourself. Here, give me the oars."

They were only a hundred yards from shore, and Tom, though tired, was not going to be rowed even part way home by a girl. She had risen, tilting the round-bottomed boat perilously.

"Sit down!" he commanded over-shoulder. He heard her laugh.

Under her rebellious lips her teeth flashed. She swayed, but her lithe figure maintained its balance:

"I will not. Gimme the oars."

She was coming forward. He wouldn't be laughed at: he relinquished his work and pushed her back just as the current flung the now unsteadied boat half-length around toward midstream.

Those conjoined movements overcame her. Tom saw her pitch to port, arms outflung, yellow hair flying — saw impudence routed from her face by fear. The boat capsized.

There was a mighty splash, a quick chill — blackness blotted out his sight — water roared in his ears.

He got a mouthful — a stomachful. Down he went — and down.

Then horror came to him, and desperate understanding. He fought his way upward, reached the surface, shook his aching head and looked wildly about him.

Over there green hills. — Over here the town. — And nowhere on the river's surface could he see Justine.

"Jus'!" he called.

To the nearer shore he called for help: the shore was empty.

"Jus'!"

Something ahead there. An uptossed hand. — Now a skirt that billowed on the water. — There she was! The stream had gripped her. It was hurling her away. — She couldn't swim. Already she was yards ahead of him.

Tom himself was an excellent swimmer. He had passed half his young life's holidays in the river whenever it was not frozen, and many of those spring days when he used to be a truant from school. Here, however, was a race with destruction, and death had the start of him.

He struck out, hand-over-hand, rolling from side to side, toward the helpless girl. Would he ever reach her? He thumped the water. Spray half blinded him. Now he lost her — now caught glimpse of her again: her gaping mouth, her white face of terror.

Close, though, at last. A stroke now.

He literally flung himself upon her.

Had her —

No, she had him!

Her arms had gone around his neck in a grasp that strangled. Her legs, vice-like, encircled his.

"L'go!"

She wouldn't. Probably she was too scared to hear.

Luckily he remembered some training received months since. He turned — and turned Justine upon her back. He could not at first free her arms, but he slipped his hands under her arm-pits and slowly managed conquest; some sense then came to her, just in time: she gave herself into his charge.

And so he rescued her. He might not risk working too heavily against the current, but he swam under her, using his feet only, keeping both their heads above water and tranquilizing her as best he could with what syllables of gasping encouragement came to him. His elbows well out and chest inflated, his body and his head almost horizontal to avoid too much "drag," he made his way. When he could finally touch bottom, he lifted her in his arms and soon lay exhausted by her side, safe ashore.

"You — saved — my life," she gasped at last. "Th-thanks, Tom."

"Oh, it — was easy!" Tom panted. "I wonder — what we'll tell — the Mercers — about their boat. — Whyn't — you sit down — when I told you to? — It was your — fault."

"It was not!" she flashed at him. "You shoved — me out!"

§ 7

"If only because he has been robbing himself" — Felton's voice rose and strengthened as he reached his peroration — "it is indeed the fool, and the fool alone — who 'hath said in his heart "There is no God!"'"

There was not any doubt of the preacher's success. Once fairly started, he had felt it; now he could see it: even old Hornaday's long face glowed responsiveness. Wonderful, thus to master the hearts of hearers, thus to command their very thoughts, by the music of your words! The high in-

toxication of power seized Felton; his phrases enslaved him as they enslaved his audience. There was a paragraph just here with some flying reference to those works lacking which, according to St. James, faith is dead; but, as the speaker approached this, he seemed to see that it was out of the picture: a sin against unity. He wondered if he dared substitute an improvisation; if he could. . . .

He did dare, and he could. Without shade of hesitation, with words as vivid and as effective as any that he had laboriously chosen and set down — words that were living things — he summed up the vision of confidence and came straight to the final repetition of his text:

" ' Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! ' "

§ 8

That afternoon, he took train for his home at the other end of the diocese. The next evening, in Doncaster, St. John's vestry met. On Tuesday morning, a messenger came to the little house where Felton had been brought up, and a moment later the young priest ran into the room in which his mother sat.

He embraced her frail shoulders, kissed her wrinkled cheeks. He waved a yellow slip of paper.

" Mother, I've got it! Everything's all right now — everything! I've got the call! "

CHAPTER FIVE

§ 1

AS Felton raised the study-window, sounds came in that were peaceful, almost rural: on the street, to the right, there was no traffic; a bat squeaked from the churchyard's dark; a damp breeze brushed a rose against some tombstone or other, and the rustling was audible here, ten yards away.

He sniffed the night. Rain threatened, but only a quiet spring rain, such as the flowers badly needed.

Over there towered the dark bulk of St. John's. A yellow path of light from this window ran across the intervening graves. Several were new ones dug since he first came to Doncaster: he had read the committal-service over old Mrs. Preston and young Lettie Loring's baby; out in Hillcrest Cemetery, over a dozen fallen calmly to sleep, and above, the threefold coffin encasing the body of that Schultz boy killed in the war and sent home from France.

Felton pressed a button in the study wall.

"Sally," he said to the old woman who was his single servant, "I'm invited up to the Averells' tonight, and it looks like rain: you'd better 'phone for a taxi to come here for me at eight-fifteen."

A comfortable room, upon which he had impressed himself. His few books, though seldom consulted, filled the case that the vestry had voted him. His tennis-racquet hung above it, and his bag of golf-sticks waited in one corner. On the flat-topped desk stood his portable typewriter, beside it a box holding the card-catalogue of his congregation.

" Oh, all right," grumbled Sally, and left the study.

Felton remembered how he had once looked through the churchyard-railings and hoped one day to live and work here. Since then, what a lot had happened!

His dear little mother was dead, and buried back home, after a tranquil time with him in this rectory, her life's last days made happy by her son's care and achievement; the poignant sorrow of her loss had passed, leaving a tender memory and the consolation of her approval. From a boy fresh out of seminary, he had become the firmly established rector of this solid parish; he was considered as much a part of St. John's, he felt sure, as the church-belfry.

That was the great change. Most of his people were still lax in the performance of their religious duties — they would doubtless always be so; it was a laxity ineradicable from their sort of life and had increased since the European conflict ended — but they were the substantial folk of the town, good at heart, and received his conscientious scoldings pleasantly. He did help them; some of them, with affectionate humor, called him " Saint " John Felton. Those who did come to hear him preach must profit: he read his sermons nowadays; there was less nervous strain involved thereby, and, if not so eloquent, he could thus give an effect of more deliberation to that broadening of his message which best suited the modern temperament of its hearers. He badly needed more money than he was paid, and the war had increased the cost of living frightfully; but his father's legacy had been wisely invested for its final recipient. When he felt the fangs of poverty, that was because his education had been too specialized to include inculcation of personal thrift. He was not immediately ambitious, or he might have won his way to a larger city, but he had become commendably known throughout this diocese as a hard worker and a " safe " man: although he might regulate badly his own business-affairs,

protected by a present salary and a future pension, he managed those of his cure admirably. Bishop Meeker had been grumbling about the small size of its confirmation-classes, but, anyhow, Felton made no enemies, kept any too-violent contention from his flock and avoided both extremes of ritual.

He turned again to the window. There certainly was rain in the air. . . .

But other changes, too.

Ernest Grigg, to be sure, though now a weirdly over-Anglicized annual visitor to Albion, remained the same genial agnostic. Hornaday and Preston were much as they had been, Judge Averell, an "ex-Judge" now, only a trifle more ponderous, his wife only a bit more Martha-Washingtonian. Tom, college over, had developed into just the wild young man that was to have been expected; Alice, at work since early girlhood in Bishop Meeker's old field among Southern poor whites, was to have returned today: of her Felton had for some years seen nothing. He himself had still his youth: his brown eyes smiled, his brown cheeks kept their dimples, his muscles their firmness.

Other changes, though. "Something," as his fellow-ministers put it, had "come over Doncaster."

Everybody agreed upon that. What nobody knew was how to get it off.

§ 2

That very morning, for instance, at the meeting of the Doncaster Ministerial Association:

"We must bring the people back to church," said Mr. Katz, the Lutheran, with characteristic briskness.

He had been saying it for ever so long. So had the other members. Indeed, the moustache of Mr. Embick, the Reformed clergyman — with the progress of the times, he and

Katz suspended their doctrinal differences — had just finished bristling above a paper on "How To Fill The Pews." It embodied several sensational attractions advocated by two new men: Ivins, the stout, white Methodist, and tawny-haired Weir from Bethesda Baptist Church.

"You can fill the pews that way," said John: "but it won't keep them filled."

"Have you any better method to suggest?" purred Ivins. The lightnings of theology flashed no more from local pulpits, but a certain social envy lingered among the non-Episcopalians.

"Not I," said Felton: himself, he had always shunned dogma, and now rather liked these fellows. "I'm only stating a case. We need help at St. John's as much as any of you. But there's no use in getting people to church once or twice: the thing is to make them form the churchgoing-habit. Somehow or other, the Catholics manage it."

"Dey use a big schtick," Embick declared — "a club dey use on deir beople."

"We shouldn't last very long if we tried that," smiled John.

"Father Barry," Katz briskly explained, "simply tells his parishioners if they don't go to church they'll go to Hell. We don't believe that, and our congregations wouldn't believe it if we did."

"It's superstition that takes a Catholic to church," Weir said.

"Ceremonial," said Ivins — "mummery. Like those poor souls out at the Greek-Russian church. I'm told it's always full."

"Although they haven't any pews there." Felton's dimples deepened. "No, I don't think ceremonial's the reason — not only ceremonial, anyhow. If Father Barry and Father Dimitri would join our association, we might learn

something from them. Father Dinwiddie certainly has enough ceremonial at St. Alban's, and yet who goes there? "

The rector of that ritualistic Episcopal church was another who did not attend these meetings; he politely separated himself from the Protestants, without being received by either the Catholics or the orthodox. Unjustly, the association regarded this as the price he paid for his parish: when America entered the European conflict, Celeste Raymond was whirled first to Washington for some sort of women's war-work, in which of course she proved a leader, and then to New York, where, now that the war was long over, she had been passing the better part of her time; but she executed sporadic raids on her mills, every small while, accompanied by her metropolitan lawyer, Litchfield — kept some rein upon her protégées and continued the sole calculable financial support of St. Alban's.

" I'm told," murmured Ivins, " Mr. Dinwiddie doesn't have to worry whether his church is popular with any of his people — except one."

Weir tossed his tawny locks. " Pretty soft! "

Already the thing had gone beyond Felton's intentions. He was contrite:

" I didn't mean any such implication. I'm sure Father Dinwiddie does what he thinks right, no matter who's pleased or displeased. My point is that he proves ceremonial isn't a lasting attraction — in itself. On the other hand " — John wanted to shunt the meeting from further consideration of a man who was, after all, a cleric in his own sect — " there are our Presbyterian friends: Mr. Cameron's services are as far away from ceremonial as anything can be, and yet — "

A diversion, but not toward peace. Less easy mannered than some of his fellows, the sallow Scot had rarely let slip, at these gatherings, a chance to sneer at that liberality of

Episcopalianism which he considered a mere mask for unbelief. Felton seldom bore malice; he had forgotten Cameron's antagonism, but of late the Presbyterian had shunned the association, and here again the association resented such a course.

"And yet nobody goes to him more'n to Dinwiddie!" Embick chewed his bristling moustache.

"Cameron is one of those fellows who were brought up in the old-fashioned forms of Calvinism," said Weir. "I beg your pardon, Embick; but your case is different. Times have changed — Cameron hasn't. So — "

"So his church is empty — I'm told," Ivins concluded.

"He hasn't so many people as we have," amended Felton: "that's what I meant to say. But then the very thing we're talking about is that none of us has so many people as we ought to have, and that if we don't get more — especially more young people — Well, the Protestant church at large is nearing a serious situation."

"Cameron," Weir persisted, "can't give his folks what they need. He doesn't even know they need more'n he gives."

It is not to be supposed that the wind of Modernism had failed to reach clerical Doncaster: only, it had never here attained storm-velocity, and was never mentioned by name. Fundamentalism might be almost entirely wafted away, but none save the pastors knew it — Felton didn't realize it — and its passage was a loss that they esteemed better undiscussed, even among themselves. The new plant, which is so old, flourishes openly rather in the larger American cities, as its extreme opponent thrives, if at all, in our rural communities. For powerful reasons, ecclesiastics of the intermediate towns desire to avoid strife. John's fellow-members in the Ministerial Association were, every one, conservative in utterance, if conscientious in suppression: none wanted "to get mixed up in that sort of thing." Felton, on his part —

having consistently given it no attention — behaved as the average Episcopalian rector of the average Episcopalian charge: his more obvious duties were difficult enough to occupy him, and he unquestioningly assumed that these other ministers believed all that they had always believed. Still, he asked idly:

"What ought we to give that we don't, any of us?"

The rector of St. John's had brought them back, after all, to the problem for so long troubling them. He could not, however, conduct them to its answer.

"It's de var," said Embick, forgetting that this process of disinterest had been observable well before that event — forgetting, like most of his generation, that there was ever anything the matter with our world between the Reformation and fatal 'Fourteen. "Effer since de var schtopped, de vorld has peen efferywhere ubside-down."

"Then it wasn't the war, but the war's end — "

"No, no, Mr. Felton," Katz briskly intervened. "The matter is too grave to joke about. The war did upset everything, and the churchgoers of Doncaster have suffered along with all the rest of the world's population."

"But we can't attack the war. It's over. We can't undo what's done — can't change the past. The question is: what are we failing to do in the present, and what must we do in the very near future?"

Obviously there had to be a scapegoat. Weir dragged out the animal with whose appearance he always ended, or adjourned, these weekly arguments:

"It's dirty politics that's the matter — that's what it is. How can we expect people to go to church when politician-protected vice is tempting folks away from Gawd? Look at the poolrooms for the boys; look at the bootleggers' speakeasies; look at the bawdy-houses! We can't get people to our places till those places are closed up!"

The association fell tooth-and-nail upon politics. Ex-Judge Averell was the town's chief politician — so strongly entrenched as not to have to buy the chief paper's support — but nobody would suspect him. Politics was the matter — politics in the abstract — with the churches.

Yes, there were changes in Doncaster!

§ 3

So the morning. In the afternoon there was first a meeting of the Ladies' Guild to attend and then a session of the less elect St. Martha's to drop into. Now, before running up to the Averells', Felton began to go over his congregational catalogue and to discover to whom parochial visits ought this week to be made: he was methodical.

There came a patter at the window. The rain had started.

"Mr. Cameron's here to see you," said wrinkled Sally, knocking, entering and speaking all at once.

"Mr. Cameron?"

"Yes."

Never before had that dour Presbyterian called here. He didn't like the rector of St. John's — had been at no pains to conceal his contempt for Felton's denomination and visited its shortcomings upon the head of the younger man.

"Well?" asked Sally.

Mystified Felton said:

"Show him in."

§ 4

The Rev. Beza Cameron uncharacteristically hesitated between a couch that stood outside the lamplight's circle and that chair well within it, across the desk: that chair placed in full view of Felton for his careful consideration of consulting parishioners. Then, however, Cameron determinedly

chose the latter post; he unbent the hinges of his lank figure and sat facing the rector, hands on pointed knees.

" Weel ye jus' be sae good as to dr-raw that blind, Meester Felton? "

He made the odd request in his usual harsh voice and waited compliance — he was clothed with his accustomed accuracy of black broadcloth and white lawn tie. But there resemblance to his everyday self halted. His smouldering eyes were downcast, his complexion was even more than common sallow, and that lantern-jaw, generally so rigid, sagged loosely.

" I've come to consult ye," he muttered.

Felton remembered his engagement at the Averells', but bowed, though wonderingly. He noticed a slight trembling of the pastor's hands:

" Anything in the world that I can do — "

" If ye can't do what I want, naebody in the wor-rld can: I ken that weel."

CHAPTER SIX

§ 1

WHAT could the man mean? He was visibly excited. Felton experienced some natural gratification at thus being sought by one so much his senior and hitherto his enemy; but he felt a no less natural embarrassment and a share of trepidation. There descended a pause, during which the rain softly pelted the window.

"Yes?" said John.

Cameron sought painfully for a beginning. "Until lately I've been a success, Meester Felton. I dare clean admeet that wi'out boastin': the whole o' Doncaster kens I've been."

"We all know it, Mr. Cameron."

"But now — o' late —" The pastor's loose frame shook. "Ah, weel, it's over."

"You mean your congregation's falling off?" Felton smiled inquiringly, but couldn't help thinking of his similar troubles. "All our congregations are shrinking. We were talking about that at the Ministerial Association this morning. You haven't been to one of our meetings lately. Perhaps, if you'd come, you might help us."

"I can help naebody, sir — an' least o' all mysel'. Why else am I talkin' wi' ye now? However 'tis wi' you, the fallin' off o' my flock's not the flock's fault: it's mine."

What was he driving at? It wouldn't be polite to hurry him — but there was that engagement at the Judge's. John felt that he must get away.

"The minister's often at fault: he generally blames him-

self; he always is blamed. But I'm by no means sure that he deserves it every time."

"Man, I do." Cameron shot his chin forward. "What's been the strength o' the Nicene Cr-reed these centuries syne? Why, the faith folk had in it — more especially the folk that taucht it." He looked around. "May I speak free?"

"Certainly. I'll keep confidential anything you care to say."

"Hum. Weel then" — and the pastor lowered his voice — "about pr-redestination, now. Do you believe in pr-redestination?"

"Why, yes. Yes, of course — that is, in my Church's view of it."

"Then I'd fair like to hear your inter-rpr-reetation o' it."

Come for advice, was he? That must be a euphemism for conscientious carrying of warfare into a foe's territory. Felton's gratification shrivelled, but his dimples showed themselves again.

"My interpretation's the one that's in our Thirty-Nine Articles."

"Weel ye quote it, sir?"

"I don't know that I can exactly quote it —" Felton reached for the prayer-book in his desk book-rack.

"I can: I've looked it up." With eyes still lowered, Cameron repeated: "'Pr-redestination to Life is the everlastin' pur-rpose o' God whereby . . . he hath constantly decr-reed . . . to deleever from cur-rse an' damnation those whom he hath chosen in Chr-rist out o' mankind.' There's your Epeescopalian deefinition."

"Of course."

"It's only half a deefinition. What about the puir bodies not decr-reed to be deleevered?"

Felton, knowing himself unfitted for theological discussion with this giant of dialectic, managed to find in that

prayer-book the Article of Religion he sought: "As the godly consideration of Predestination . . . is full of . . . unspeakable comfort to godly persons . . . so, for curious and carnal persons. . . . Predestination is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living." That did seem rather a dodging. But the rector was on the defensive; his brown glance glinted:

"The Article assumes common sense in its reader. If only the chosen are to be delivered, it stands to reason that those who are not chosen — "

"The Presbyteerians an' the Congregationalists an' all the Calvinistic Baptists are a wee bit more explicit. They don't juke the issue."

"I am not a Calvinistic."

Cameron flung out his long arms:

"I'm here seekin' no strife. Ye'll forgi'e me if I seemed to be. I said the fault o' my congregation's shrinkage lay wi' me. It does, for nae man can hold ithers wha' canna hold himsel'. It's because ye Epeescopalians do juke that I'm come. Meester Felton, in your Epeescopal opeenion, is there ony way ar-round this doctrine for a Christian that no more believes it? "

The rector looked up quickly to repel this insinuation against his Church, but he was filled with a fresh wonder, and the pain he saw in that still lowered face opposite him made him turn back to the book opened on his desk. It was out, the gnawing secret. Of all people to lose faith in one jot of his sect's creed, Cameron! Who would have guessed it? A queer shame for him flooded Felton. Something inside warned: "Don't be too late at the Averells'." Something else snapped: "Shut up! " The light of the electric lamp seemed to falter. He wished devoutly that the man had sought advice elsewhere; yet, if there were any chance

to win this stern soul to the rector's own and gentler faith — or any chance of easing the spiritual pain — duty was clear.

"The Article implies — " Yes, it quite evidently did! — ". . . implies that we mustn't inquire too closely. 'Most dangerous,' it says."

"'For carnal per-rsons,'" the inflexible pastor contended. His head was raised now at the call of his lifelong love for theological inquiry, but the facial muscles worked spasmodically. "My doubts may ha'e robbed me o' the Speerit the Article talks anent, but I'm no mere curious or carnal per-rson — yet. I'm a pr-reacher o' God's Word, sir, an' I mun think o' its meanin'. Weel, I can no longer believe the Almighty's so unmerciful."

"There is free will."

"But the Eternal must ha'e had complete pr-reknowledge, an' where's the kindness o' gi'in' free-will if He knew the most o' us'd use it to our damnation — if He decr-reed that we should so use it, 'before the foundations o' the wor'rld were laid?' No, Meester Felton, these ten weeks syne, I've been studyin' what Calvin said about it, an' all the day here what your theologians said, an' I can no longer unnerstand one or ither. It's wi' a faint hope that your lang readin' o' your ain divines might 'a' found summat my brief readin' didna find that I'm come here to speer ye."

John felt his cheeks warming. He was keenly aware that, in the field of impromptu theological discussion, he could present no argument not already destroyed by Cameron: when he left the seminary, Felton's study of such subjects ceased. He did not even know just where, offhand, satisfactorily to look this matter up. "If you'll give me time — a few days — "

"But it's fundamental." Cameron marvelled. He extended a bony forefinger. "Ye must ken your fundamental doctrines!"

" Of course. We learn them early, in our preparation for the ministry. Only, as to their niceties, there's not much reference to those in parish-work, and — "

" Ye moderns! Ivins an' Weir — all these new men are like that — an' Embick an' Katz are on their way to it; nae doot that harum-scarum lass o' Dinwiddie's'll force him to follow."

§ 2

Felton had forgotten the Averells; he was rereading that Seventeenth Article, in quest of some ready textual help therefrom. For respite he asked:

" How did you ever begin to doubt, Mr. Cameron? "

The pastor sank his face between his long hands and groaned:

" I don't know. 'Twas gr-radual an' subtle. 'Twas so subtle that I misdoubt it may 'a' been the Deil's wor-rk — but it's accomplished. I know all our arguments and ' none o' these things move me.' " Suddenly he stood up. " Man," he said, " d'ye ken what this means to me? One o' my forebears was that verra Cargill wha' excommunicated his King, Charles II. Cameronian I'm not, but Calvinist I was and dir-rect deescended from Dick Cameron, the Covenant Martyr killed at Airs Moss. To think this should come to me! That's why I asked the blind drawn: street-passers can jus' spy a corner here, an' I want that none needn't to see the pass I'm come to. — Aye, Meester Felton, that doctrine's in my blood an' marrow. Taucht it as a wee bairn at Garnkirk, I've been tachin' o' it to ithers for twa score year an' twa — the Westmeenster Confession: ' Whereby for His Ain Glory He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass? Pr-redestination to damnation as weel as to glory! An' now am I to go on tachin' wha' I canna believe? "

That was a cry of anguish. No matter what this frag-

ment of theology might seem to some, to Beza Cameron it had lived as the life-principle of his faith, and his faith was dying with it. The happy spectre of William James fluttered across Felton's troubled memory:

"There's such a thing as the Will to Believe — "

"Talk not to me o' effort, Meester Felton. Do I look as if I hadna tried? "

His great height raised Cameron above the shaded lamp's radiance, but he stood near enough to be plainly seen. The poise of that grizzled head, the lined brow, those smouldering eyes, the tightened face: all pictured his futile struggle. Of what account indeed how the thing had come to him, since here so plainly it was to stay? "

Felton had reached the concluding paragraph of Article XVII. Relieved, he read aloud:

"'Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise as they are set forth in Holy Scripture.' There probably is a chance for a more liberal interpretation — a qualification, Mr. Cameron. I really believe that if you will only give me a little time, I can find in some of my books — some of our English divines — a way around — I mean through and out of — your difficulty." He had another inspiration. "And I'll write Bishop Meeker. If you then still feel like coming into our Church, why, predestination isn't mentioned in our catechism, you know: I scarcely think the Bishop will insist on this question of Predestination anyhow."

Cameron blinked. "Not insist? If no' included in your catechism, here, onyway are these ar-rticles — "

"You see, the Articles were drawn up a long while ago in England — "

"Till two generations syne, a man got no degree at Oxford or Cambridge onless he accepted them."

"I didn't know — but that *was* two generations ago. Even the present American form of the Articles dates back to — "

"I ken all that, just as I ken the tinkerin' at the Westmeenster Confession. But, man alive, there this ar-rticle stands today in your prayer book as you've read it. Are your Ar-rticles o' Religion ar-rticles o' religion or not — an' if not, for why does your chur-rch retain 'em?"

"The strength of the Episcopal Church," Felton began "lies exactly in its breadth, in the latitude of interpretation it allows its members —"

Cameron's sallow face flamed. He broke out:

"I might 'a' known it! I always said a man could be onythin' or naethin' an' still ye'd keep him, you folk. Your Article XVII might leave me a hole to cr-reep through; d'ye think I'd tak' my way through it into a chur-rch whose verra beeshops ye tell me don't care ain way or ither?" Even his eyes blazed now: there were so-called Christians who could think that his soul's struggle was an ado about nothing! "Wha's R-Rome to this? The Whore o' Babylon don't straddle, onyhow. If your muckle Meeker said some loose deefinition was the richt one, I'd respect him an' might come in; or if he said the strict deefinition was the richt one, I'd respect him an' stay out; but when he as good as says either's richt an' neither matters, I lose all respect for him as an honest man, an' I tur-rn frae his chur-rch as a truckler!"

Cameron made for the study-door.

Felton sprang up. The smile had left him; the glow of youth abandoned his round cheeks to angry pallor. His loyalty was in arms for its flouted sect:

"Goodbye, sir. I suppose you will remain in the Presbyterian Church — where you certainly have no right to be."

§ 3

Cameron wheeled. The rector half expected a physical attack and wondered how, what with his sturdy body and the

spiritual position of them both, he should meet it; but, to his horror, he saw Cameron's chest heave, and tears — difficult, masculine tears — coursing down that twisted face.

" I've no been wholly truthfu' to ye, an' I canno go wi' a lie on my lips an' anger in the hear-rt o' me. I meant most o' what I said, but I didna say it all, an' there was naethin' personal intended." He thrust out his arms again. " Felton, man, can't ye see I spoke as much in deesappointment as onythin'? I had some thought o' comin' intae your chur-rch, so be I could do it appr-rovin' an' couldna gae back to my ain; but what I wanted in my puir tempted soul (may the Lord God forgi'e me!) was that you, as a young an' clever man, an' an Epeescopalian, might hae a reason pat on your tongue-tip that would lull me into falsely remainin' where I was bricht up an' where I hoped to dee."

Scarcely a compliment, but Felton possessed a well of pity, and now it overflowed. He took those outstretched hands.

" Sit down again," said he.

Cameron obeyed. He buried his grizzled head on his long arms extended upon the desk.

Felton was sorry. He was so sorry! That, however, was all he knew. He did not know what to do or say. And yet he could not lightly leave this old man alone with his grief, for there is no grief so awful as that of age.

" Heresy," said the rector, beginning anywhere because he had no idea where he was going and was conscious only that words had always been his friends — " heresy, of course, is as serious now as it ever was, but it's not persecuted any more. If the Inquisition used to hand Protestants over to the civil authorities, who killed them — and if your own Calvin burned Servetus, or had him burned — why, I seem to remember hearing that the early Fathers opposed such things as contradictory to the Gospel-spirit. After all, nobody's

going to lock you up, even if you don't believe in predestination." — It was terrible to see the man fallen there! — " If you can't conscientiously go into the Episcopal Church, there are others. You might even get into the ministry of some other."

From the bowed head came a muffled voice:

" At my age? Ye ken weel naebody'd want me. There's that, too, to be thocht about: siller, money. An' hae I no thocht about that? I'm a carefu' man, but wha' bit could I lay by out o' a meenister's wage? Ye ken I've a wife an' bairns, an' I've nary knowledge o' ony trade save this I was unhappily brocht up to." Cameron raised a ghastly face. " But o' course I can't stay where I am — can I? "

Years seemed to Felton to have passed since that moment when he found flattery in this man's seeking of him. The quest had been explained. Youth is accustomed to mistrust age, but here was age in deep distress, and that was on no account to be passed by. The old instinctively doubt youth, too, whereas here was an old man realizing his inevitable defeat at the hands of life, and clinging to a young man for succor: it might be, to the young man's view, a somewhat repugnant spectacle, but it was wholly pitiable. The trouble was that age wanted — when does it not? — more than youth could give — wanted compromise under the high sun of truth, whereas youth's strongest sense is its sense of unbending justice. Felton's soul was wrung, yet he had to say:

" Remember Emerson. He left the Unitarian ministry because he didn't believe — I think it was because he didn't believe that the Lord's Supper was intended for a permanent sacrament."

Cameron's lips curled grimly. His coat was disordered; his lawn tie had worked around its collar until it was under one ear, and yet he was incontrovertibly tragic. " I'm scarce

ony Ralph Waldo. The Unitarians are gey glad to claim him now — and then he was a young man."

"But you can't stay in your Church and not believe its idea of predestination. Suppose I denied the episcopacy — not only the Apostolic Succession, but the theory of the episcopacy — or any of our fundamental doctrines: could I honestly stop here? I'd be a traitor in the camp."

"I ken it — oh, I ken it! An' yet, Meester Felton, I am sixty-two year' old."

"You're known here; you're liked. Everybody likes you." — That was not quite true, but its utterance seemed imperative. — "I'll see what I can do. I can get you something." — There the rector's youth assured him of his veracity. — "I know I can."

Sally thrust her wrinkled face in at the study-door. "That there taxi — "

"Tell him to come back in fifteen minutes."

The servant disappeared, grumbling. Cameron stood up:

"Am I keepin' you frae ony engagement? "

"That's all right." Let the Averells wait: this man needed Felton.

But the man had finished. His confession made, the shock of it was passing. His resolution was taken.

"Thank ye, Meester Felton. I'm no denyin' that I'll be in need o' mateerial help, an' I'm gratefu' for the offer. Failin' gettin' ony wor-rk for mysel', I'll tak' whatever ye can gie me." A decent pride squared his lantern-jaw. "But ye mustn' suppose I cam' here for that. I cam' for speer-ritual help, first off."

"I hope — " The rector suffered a heart-twinge. "I've said what I'm sure is right — the only thing I could say. I hope I haven't quite " — he wrung the hand that dangled near him — "haven't quite failed you spiritually, either."

He was afraid it sounded priggish, and priggish self-

righteousness was the feeling just then farthest from him. He felt only sorrow and humility.

"Ye have na," said Cameron.

Felton's brown eyes glistened. "There's a club in Philadelphia," he said: "the Union League. It was formed during the Civil War, and one of its rules is that every candidate for membership has to belong to the Republican Party. Well, that club long ago almost stopped being political, and yet, in all these years, there's been only one case where a member that changed his party-views didn't immediately resign his Union League membership."

Cameron moved out of the study and into the brightly lighted hall, Felton following. Over the Scot's sallow face had come a change, a look that was hard to understand. It was almost one of happiness, certainly one of certitude:

"Meester Felton, I'm no that man. I'd all but made up my mind 'fore I cam' to you; but I did hang on a wee bit to the chance o' your help in t'other deerection, the one I eendicated. Ah, weel, there was naught in it — an' ye've bra'ly backed up and strengthened my ain conveections. I'm your debtor, sir. — I'm no that one man in your Union League."

He opened the front door, and the rain swept in. It was pouring.

"I've that taxi ordered," said Felton. "If you'll wait — "

"Nae thanks. Here's my umbrell'."

"— or I can ring for one to come right away."

"I mun walk, man — walk! " They shook hands again, firmly. "Good nicht to ye, and thank ye, Meester Felton."

Something besides Cameron's hand suddenly seized the Episcopalian. "I'm so much younger than you are: I wish you'd call me John."

He smiled his boyish smile, and a flash like a smile marvellously answered it:

"Good nicht — Johnnie, lad."

"I'll do what I can. I'm sure it will be all right. I'll call you up just as soon as I find anything."

"Thank ye kindly." Cameron was on the step — had raised his umbrella. "Good nicht again to ye. It's a gey wet nicht, but may all your days be bricht an' braw."

He walked away into the downpour and the darkness.

BOOK TWO: Alice

BOOK TWO: Alice

CHAPTER SEVEN

§ 1

"FELTON," said Judge Averell, passing a hand across the billowy snowdrift of his hair and drawing his brows together, "I am glad you didn't let this miserable rain keep you at home."

Out of court and church, the Judge was generally a genial, though ponderous, man-of-the-world. Few Doncastrians wore evening-clothes every evening, but, in private life, the Judge's cutaway coat and striped trousers, his white spats and red tie, ever loyally supported the festival air of his comfortable paunch and florid face.

"I hope I'm not late," said John. "I had — Someone came in to consult me and stayed rather longer than I'd expected him to."

Did a slight shadow cloud the ex-judicial brow? Perhaps, but the former Judge answered:

"Not enough to matter."

Mrs. Averell, in her Marie Antoinette manner, though still resembling Martha Washington, attempted to dispel doubt completely. "Of course a rector is at the beck and call of his parishioners, Mr. Felton. We always make allowances for that."

She spoke in her "company" voice, a quiet, but decided, soprano. Felton, however, knew her too well not to know that now she, too, was preoccupied.

"Everybody is slightly late tonight," said her husband.

"There are several people coming?"

Felton had understood that this was to be no party. His invitation was for what Doncaster called "a cold supper," and these affairs were usually servantless and intimate, with their hour not too rigorously defined. Here he was in that still Eighteen-Eighty parlor in which Bishop Meeker first spoke to him of St. John's as a possibility. How awesome this room had then seemed to the young man — how familiar it had since become! His calm brown gaze traversed it: no tokens of an unwonted social event. Somehow, the thought came to him of gaunt Cameron walking through the rain —

"There is to be only one other guest," said Judge Averell: "I asked Ernest Grigg to drop in." An onyx clock stood on the mantelpiece: he looked at it, then made a visible effort to shake off whatever incubus had descended upon him.

"And Alice?" Felton casually inquired. "I hope to see her." His politeness never seemed perfunctory.

"Of course Alice."

"You thought that southern work too much for her in the end?"

"They are retrenching, you know. Unfortunately, people do not support such things with the strength they used to exhibit."

Disturbed by the sense that something was oppressing this household, Felton had forgotten a published announcement that the "drive" for fresh funds for mission-work among the cracker-whites had failed. "Oh, yes! But I understood that Alice was indispensable," he hurriedly supplied. — Was the trouble Alice? — "I trust she's quite well?"

"Quite."

"And not too tired by her journey?"

"You remember she was down there as a girls' athletic instructor, Felton. Tired? She made an engagement for a

round of golf at the country-club tomorrow, as soon as she arrived." The Judge stroked his white moustache.

Annoying to be wrong every time! What, Felton wondered, had become of his habitual tact? Cameron had disturbed him. He sought safe ground.

"Anyhow, it must seem like old times to have her back, Mrs. Averell."

"Indeed it does. My little nest has been empty for so long —" began the hostess, and stopped short.

"But you've had Tom back for quite a while now." Young Averell was not among the rector's favorites: although a year out of college, Tom had always the sophomoric jeer for religion; if he worshipped anything, it was his speedy touring-car. Still, he was the Senior Warden's son, Felton's host's son, and, in any case, one must make some allowances for youth. "Tom will be here this evening, Judge?"

The merely polite question was no sooner put than the inquirer realized that it was the thought of Tom with which the elder Averells were preoccupied. The Judge looked again at the onyx clock; Mrs. Averell looked at the Brussels carpet.

"I — ah — I hope so," said the Judge.

His wife said: "Tom's out for a ride, but we told him you and Mr. Grigg were coming. We expected he'd be back —"

"He will be here any minute now," said Judge Averell, almost pompously.

What had Tom been up to this time? Well, the rector wouldn't speculate upon that; he must extricate himself from the social bog into which he had stupidly blundered:

"This rain will be good for —"

In the hall a bell rang. Felton prayed that this was Tom. The glances exchanged between Judge Averell and his wife

said two things. The mother's shouted: "There he is!" The father's muttered: "Perhaps!"

Curtains — plush in winter; in summer, silk — took the place of a door from parlor to passage. They did not quite meet. Through them Ernest Grigg now came in.

§ 2

No, whatever had happened to all Doncaster, Grigg was grown only into a caricature of his own conception of an Englishman, not a day older. His pointed bald head glistened, his Vandyck beard shone as if it were so much silver, and, above his brightly pink cheeks, his birdlike eyes shone, too. He now wore evening clothes every night; he even bought collars designed to show that his anglicism was by no means all assumed: he had the red neck of a born Briton. Difficult to think him the shrewd business-man that he really was, but impossible to avoid the essential Grigg.

"Charmed, Mrs. Averell; it's no good my making apologies for tardiness. Judge, you look top-hole. 'Low, Felton." He shook hands all around, then backed to the hot-air heater and stood under the spurious Murillo, much as Bishop Meeker had once stood there, in the attitude of an Anglo Saxon before his own hearth. "Heard the news about Celeste Raymond — what? She's back, you know."

"Celeste," said Mrs. Averell, "is so restless."

John had a vision of the raven black tresses.

"To stay?"

"Rather. And she's not Celeste Raymond any more."

"Oh," gurgled the Judge's wife, who always delighted in weddings as such and without any small considerations concerning their future, "you don't mean she's — "

"Married," sparkled Grigg.

Felton's acquaintance with the stormy-petrel had been

largely confined to her post-war descents upon her native city, but he knew something of her story. Left by her parents' death probably the richest woman in the State, she was the daughter of a niggardly mill-owner whose sole departure from the conventional had been his marriage, while securing a contract in the French West Indies, to a Martinique wife, born of an old Provençal family. Celeste was educated in Paris and never thereafter ceased to startle Doncaster:

"So she'll live here?"

Mrs. Averell interrupted. "But it's so like her — so sudden! And no invitations — not even announcements. I suppose it was in New York. I do think she might have had it here."

"She 'had it' before the magistrate."

The Judge's spouse gasped, but finally thought of the other principal. "Who is the man?"

"Her lawyer," shimmered Grigg: "that potty Litchfield chap. He's chucked his New York firm, so's to be near her business. I can't see how he'll stick it, but he's going to practice in Doncaster."

"Courtlandt Litchfield?" With such a person involved, one apparently had to think of the potentialities: Mrs. Averell's Martha Washington mouth drooped. "From what little I've seen of him, I don't think he's a very nice —"

"My dear!" the Judge cautioned, but he didn't manage it well, for there were already far too many lawyers in Doncaster. Most of them practiced for virtually nothing and made their money in real-estate or insurance. He glanced at the clock. "I was under the impression that this Mr. Litchfield had a wife."

"Right-o. 'Had's' the word."

"He is divorced?"

"You hit it in one, Judge."

Divorces were common enough, but in this divorce Mrs. Averell, being a good churchwoman, saw a special case. "Poor Father Dinwiddie! He's such a sweet character, too. What will he do? And what will become of St. Alban's now? He — it — they're so dependent on Celeste's money!"

"It's a pretty problem," Grigg enthusiastically acquiesced; "but it's odds-on the Church will find a way around it."

"Oh!" said his hostess.

"Well, I'll lay you what you like *you* jolly well won't cut Celeste, Mrs. Averell."

"That's different. Church is a different thing from — "

"Not so very different." Grigg cocked his shining head. "The bars are coming down everywhere these days — what? Old Gee-Gee's the sole survivor of Nineteenth Century religion I know. Any church can find a way around anything, though the Catholics are the best at it. They're a bit strict on divorce, but there's their limit: Father Barry's carted off the fence between the consecrated and the unconsecrated parts of his parish cemetery. Look at the dancing Methodists and the Congregationalists and Presbies that don't damn unbaptized babies any more. Rummy! Even Ike Rosenbaum's taken to eating ham sandwiches for lunch. — Oh, Dinwiddie'll win his race with his problem in a walk."

"Mr. Grigg!"

"You just wait."

Grigg was forever throwing out challenges like that; except on his still continued Sunday afternoons in this house, they were rarely taken up; only here really did present itself, as Mrs. Averell had felt, an unusual instance. Celeste Raymond — legally Litchfield now — was somebody they all knew and would have, in one degree or another, to deal with. Doncaster truly contained many divorced persons that had

not remarried; it contained some that had, but they clove to other faiths. Celeste, if not of St. John's, was at least of St. Alban's parish, and the fact that St. Alban's represented the ultramondaine portion of the Episcopal element simply intensified matters: the other sects, and the Griggs of no sect, were quite too ready to criticize; right wing and left might hate each other, yet, when it came to an affair of general outside interest, they should present an apparently united front to the enemies temporarily allied against them. A very unusual instance indeed.

Then, in this abrupt presentation of it, most unfortunate. Here present was Felton. The Judge was a Senior Warden, delegate to all diocesan and most general conventions — where he had been several times beaten, in one cause or another, by delegates whom powerful and everywhere active Celeste either controlled or influenced — and he enjoyed his weekly discussions with Grigg; but the Judge, still every little while furtively consulting that onyx clock, thought that everything had its place and nothing could be quite correct when it was somewhere else: when one was invited to a cold supper, it was not really decent to bring one's religious or anti-religious opinions along. Felton, on the other hand, wore the church's uniform. Even though it was, to be sure, a fatigue-uniform, he had to reply. It was unpleasant — still, the Averells themselves felt he had to.

So he did. He had heard enough slurs on his sect for one evening.

" The American Episcopal Church," said he, annoyed that his round cheeks should color, " permits, under a revised canon, the remarriage of the innocent party in a divorce-case."

Grigg caressed his beard with one of those dry hands which were the only things about him declarative of his years. " Innocent of what? "

Mrs. Averell looked at the clock. The rector's color deepened:

"Of any violation of the Seventh Commandment."

"Felton," laughed the little sceptic, "I'd never have suspected you of having such a wicked mind — what? 'Charity thinketh no evil.' Even this Litchfield blighter didn't go as far as that. He only went as far as Nevada, established a residence and in six months got a decree on the ground of desertion. Does the canon provide for desertion?"

A blow. "I suppose," said Felton, his color still deeper, "that what we are all thinking about is the question of admitting a person so divorced to Holy Communion. I've given you the theory. In practice, the Church sometimes leaves the decision to the parish-priest: he's in a position to know facts that — in a position to discover extenuating circumstances that would be un — "

"Only Dinwiddie's a High Churchman. He's committed to the Catholic point of view and all that sort of thing."

The Judge rearranged his red tie. It was high time his legal training should speak. "It is Mr. Litchfield that was divorced. Celeste's position remains unaltered."

He felt the argument's weakness, but hoped it would pass undetected. He should have known Grigg better.

"Not good enough for Dinwiddie," was the immediate answer. "From the Catholic point of view, this Litchfield chap's still married to his first wife, and Celeste in living with him, is living in a state of sin. Still Father Brethwald'll dig up a precedent. Celeste supports his church; most of the congregation works in the Raymond mills and goes to St. Alban's because she jolly well says they must; she's strong enough to name Meeker's successor when the time comes for one. Oh, Dinwiddie'll dig up a precedent!"

Felton thought of that poor old scholar, immersed in his musty volumes, an agreeable ascetic, rigid, taking counsel of

nobody and materially dependent upon his one rich parishioner, able to enforce Roman forms and trappings upon his folk because Celeste liked them, unable to control the actions of his own madcap daughter, Justine. They had never been friendly, the rector of St. John's and he of St. Alban's — the latter considered the former too broad and said so — but here was a practical matter — a vital matter. Personally, Felton began to think the theory of the Church in this particular too general, too drastic. It might put Dinwiddie into a position not dissimilar to that of Cameron. Would Dinwiddie bear himself after unhappy Cameron's manner?

Mrs. Averell attempted a solution. "Really, though, Celeste is good-hearted. I guess she just won't present herself for Communion."

But Grigg snorted. "Won't she just? Rather! You wait and see."

The Judge was more resourceful than his wife. He gave another glance to the clock, then forced his cupid's bow of a mouth to smile through his white moustache:

"At all events, gentlemen, I do not think that we should delay the cocktails any longer."

§ 3

Everybody was ready for this armistice. Felton smiled again. Mrs. Averell felt so relieved at the discussion's end and was still patently so worried about something else, that she consented to join the men: she had never drunk any alcohol before the advent of Prohibition, but nowadays everybody did it, and there was always some good reason why it was almost necessary. Grigg never refused; he said he preferred a Scotch-and-soda, however; he praised the Judge's bootlegger, asked his address and vouchsafed the information that there would be some good rye in town on Wednes-

day, because the Redlands Valley Distillery was to be "robbed" tomorrow evening.

"That is alarming," the host chuckled; "and nobody that has once sat on the bench must be told about it — nobody of my former position."

"What price Felton's present position?"

The rector smilingly thought no law binding in a republic that ran contrary to the will of the majority. In a few minutes the cocktails had done what a moderate number of cocktails is sure to do: dissention was temporarily forgotten. It was some minutes before Grigg again sounded, and this time all innocently, a discordant note. He looked over his shoulder where, on the mantelpiece under the Annunciation, the Judge had placed a fifth and sixth cocktail:

"I say, who are the extras for?"

"One is for Alice."

"She's coming down? Good. I expect she got pretty well fed up with that mission-rot. And the other? Oh, Tom's, of course! Where is Tom?"

Tom's mother studied the false Murillo, Tom's father the ceiling.

"Tom," said the Judge, "is motoring."

"And late? With a girl — what? Well, you mustn't grouse, Judge. I can recall the time when you and I —"

Judge Averell's blue eyes hardened. "At that time a girl was either a good girl or a — or not. Nowadays —"

"Nowadays they're mostly not? Something's polluted the minds of all my friends this evening. By Jove, it has!"

"You will admit that we did not have flappers in our time, Ernest." — "Flapper" was a word lately gone out of use, but the Judge was always as slow to drop words as to adopt them.

"Sherwood!" admonished Mrs. Averell.

"We don't have 'em now, in America — worse luck," said

Grigg: "There's only a lot of brainless girls with bobbed hair and champagne-colored legs trying to be flappers, and a lot of what we chaps used to call 'saphead young men' writing about 'em."

"I know no other term," Judge Averell protested, "adequately descriptive of that Greek girl that Celeste Raymond — Litchfield — took up a few years ago — or Justine Dinwiddie."

"What's that about Justine?" asked a voice from behind the curtains of the arched doorway to the dark hall. "You know I never would hear a word against Justine, father."

"Alice," said the Judge, "I was about to call you. Your cocktail's getting warm."

CHAPTER EIGHT

§ 1

"YOU remember Alice?"

Felton remembered a very young girl, almost a child, whose candid gaze had considered him on that Spring morning when he first passed as a priest from the chancel of St. John's: a young girl of unusual coloring, who listened gravely to his first sermon.

"Not this Alice," he smiled.

For the girl had grown up. Here was the oval face and blue-black hair worn in an Italian way — Latin, save for the gray eyes' wide denial — here stood the Judge's daughter; but changed, or at least developed. The always slim figure was become athletic; Carolinian suns had tanned the cheeks' olive; above all, the expression showed now that efficiency which humor humanizes and only the habit of giving can give. Calm radiating energy: there, he thought, was her note — poise and something more than poise. More than composure: conscious youth, none of the self-satisfaction of mere youth. She —

Her grip was an honest as a boy's. Her eyes met his brown eyes squarely.

"I remember you, of course: this you, Mr. Felton."

He wondered. She somehow made him doubtful whether he had not changed — and not as she had. A good organizer and administrator of the social forces in his charge, an indefatigable parish-worker: nevertheless, the size of attendant congregations, which he had meant to increase —

"How do you do, Mr. Grigg? — Don't wait for Tom, father, and don't either you or mother be silly about Justine. Supper's been on the table for ages." Alice kissed her mother's soft cheek and ran a sturdy arm half-around her father's middle. "Mr. Felton, parents are so modest these days that they don't even realize how well they've trained their children to take care of themselves."

§ 2

Badly lighted by day, the Averell dining-room suffered at night that cruel betrayal which electricity effects in a house built during the gas-era. The sideboard was rigorous, the still-life pictures suggested fruit unpleasantly preserved from the preceding century; it must have been impossible for even the Judge to accept the authenticity of that alleged Hebbena landscape between the windows, and the portraits of host and hostess, painted twenty years since by an Hungarian count tarrying in Doncaster while commissions lasted, gave no impression of ever having remotely resembled their originals. At the square mahogany extension-table one place lay ominously unoccupied: errant Tom's.

"For these and all His blessings, the Lord make us truly thankful."

"Amen," said the Judge in his legal voice.

"Amen," his wife whispered.

Alice's lovely lips moved inaudibly.

Grigg grunted compromise between politeness as a guest and loyalty to his private opinions.

The chairs scraped.

"That servant-girl always neglects to put on the liquor." Grumbling Judge Averell turned to the buffet.

"I set the table," said Alice.

"Then you ought to be forbidden a drink."

Alice helped herself: not to much, Felton noted, but to enough not to be an outsider.

At each place reposed a half grape-fruit. A huge cold ham, cloves inbedded in its pallid fat, stood for carving as a convicted criminal faces the bench for sentence. Olives and salted almonds filled four cut-glass dishes, and three kinds of jellies offered themselves to those hot baking-powder biscuits which Mrs. Averell, who "wouldn't let Alice do another thing," soon brought on. A generous heap of chicken-salad, crisply lettuce-cradled, began its rotation.

Felton caught himself watching Alice. . . .

Before he came to Doncaster, his relations with women had been no more and no less than those of the average divinity-student; once installed at St. John's, he had wisely confined them to church-services, parish duties and social gatherings where the individual merges into the mob. There were times, to be sure, when he was bothered: women always harass a clergyman, which explains why so many Protestant ministers are misogynists, and why so many more marry young. He had not fallen into the former class, but he carefully avoided joining the latter. Some day he would take a wife — he needed one, and a minister's work required one — but he had seen Katz, the Lutheran, tormented by a jealous Mrs. Katz; poor Cameron plodding under the load of an ever-increasing family; the Methodist Ivins make progress beyond the powers of a struggling girl-wife to keep pace: Felton proposed to commit no folly. . . .

"Father," said Alice, "I heard part of what you were saying about Celeste Raymond. What's she been doing now?"

For their mother, Mrs. Averell's children would never grow up. "You shouldn't listen, Alice."

"You know how father's voice carries. I was only sorry I didn't hear more."

The Judge frowned upon a fork overburdened by chicken salad and a piece of ham. "Never mind now."

"She's got to know it, you know — what?" Grigg cocked his polished head. "Alice, Celeste's married her swine of a lawyer, and he's a divorced man. Your mother wondered how Dinwiddie'd manage about Lady Raymond — at Communion, you know — and I said he'd understand which side his bread was buttered on: then the lot of 'em slanged me."

"Ernest," began the Judge, "you really — "

But Alice took a sip of watered whiskey and said in her own defense. "I thought that was it. Well, of course Dr. Dinwiddie will either have to turn his back on all he's stood for, or else refuse her."

"Oh, I say — " began Grigg, with a perky glance — instantly resented — for John.

The girl turned suddenly on them all:

"Nobody could call me high-church; but when it comes to a thing like this, I'm all for Justine's father and the way he thinks. If he gave Celeste Communion, it would be only because she's rich: it would be — be — what do you call it, Mr. Felton? — simony!"

She faced them, girlish, flushed, yet manifestly moved by deep feeling.

Grigg, considering himself adept in psychology, later told Rosenbaum that what spoke was the subconscious jealousy of a young unmarried woman, who ought to be married, for an older woman who just had been. John there and then set it down to a youthful demand for the course requiring courage as against one involving concession — undirected youth always insisted on the harder of two ways: the mood, he thought, would pass; but, though he did not quite agree with it, he admired it. Perhaps the Judge was alone in assuming it a sincere expression of fixed conviction; at all events, for Alice's mother anything was better than her

daughter's playing such a part; here in the one room where there should have been none, stood another clock, and Mrs. Averell had been distressfully dividing glances between it and her son's empty chair:

"I do wish Tom would come!"

Perhaps he would telephone. He ought anyhow to telephone.

Felton, a good guest, tried to shift the talk to his choir-troubles — that always ample source of conversation for every minister — but either the reference to St. Alban's or the mention of Tom set all minds upon Justine Dinwiddie, and he had to hear, for the hundredth time, how her misdemeanors had driven her from one after another of the boarding-schools to which Celeste's money sent her. The sole relief was Alice's defense of the girl — Justine, politely yet valorously presented as merely a high-spirited creature without chance at home to vent her healthy exuberance, and always misunderstood by her teachers:

"Everybody thinks a clergyman's daughter must be different from everyone else. I don't see why. I was a judge's daughter, and people didn't think it worse for me to flunk than it was for the other girls." The pleader blew a kiss to each of her parents. "It's horrid always to be in the opposition like this; but when I knew Jus', all she needed was a friend."

"I'm afraid she has almost too many at present" — Mrs. Averell's quiet voice possessed decision — "and the worst is that Russian-Greek girl Celeste made into a mill-office stenographer."

Ice-cream and strawberries were imported from the kitchen, and coffee was drunk out of large cups. Alice learned that, during her absence, Celeste had established Miss Zalokostas at St. Alban's, and that Dora — she took a seat in the middle of the church and, by there watching and

imitating her neighbors, "had learned the right thing" — was now among Father Brethwald's Sunday audiences, although not yet a communicant. Felton said a good word for her, because he was by nature charitable and because the memory of Cameron and the presence of Alice made him especially tender toward all the world; but Mrs. Averell thought it queer to transplant people and wondered what that Russian priest said when, so long since, this transplanting happened:

"If he said anything — he looks so mild."

"Stunning girl, anyhow," declared Grigg, as one that knows — "What?"

"My dear," the Judge ruled, "I think you and Alice had better clear the table."

"But I'll leave Tom's place," the mother ventured, "and put a few things on a plate for him."

§ 3

It was while the host went for more whiskey, and his guests returned to the parlor, that Felton had opportunity for a word with Grigg:

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Rather. I never keep anything else."

"You won't have to keep this one long. Cameron's in trouble."

"What? Old Beza?" The Presbyterian was considerably Grigg's junior. "That's a good 'un! Who's the lady?"

"Her name," said Felton, "is Predestination." And — as he felt he might — he told, without dwelling on its poignant personal note, of that evening's interview in his study.

It pleased the good-natured agnostic even more than he

would have been pleased by the sort of scandal he assumed at the subject's introduction. It saddled Grigg's hobby.

" Why doesn't he chum with the Universalists? They were started by renegade Presbyterians, and they don't believe anybody's going to be damned — neither by predestination nor free-will. They used to say Christ's grace would work a general salvation; now their best preachers are letting Christ out of the running, and backing what they call ' an indestructible urge for beneficent immortality.' "

" He's not going into any church," said Felton.

" Then he can be a Unitarian: unitarianism's not a church. Those chaps began by holding to the miracles ' in attestation of the claims of Christianity.' How about miracles in the Unitarian fold these days? — One God! How many of 'em believe in anything but a hypothesis these days? As for that, how many of 'em believe a straight line's the shortest distance between two points? — Cameron can go into a Unitarian pulpit and preach ethics."

" He doesn't want a pulpit; he wants a job."

" Does he, by Jove? " Grigg cocked his bald head. " Why, this sounds like pluck! Begging your pardon, of course, parson; but an onlooker like myself can't help seeing how things are in all the sects, these days: ' Defiled . . . because they have . . . changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.' That's not me; it's Isaiah."

" You can't — "

" Oh, I'm not attacking any church: I'm attacking the worst enemies of every church — the evaders and word-jugglers, the chaps that stay in when they're no longer of it. They're the worst enemies of every church — and their own worst enemies — what? "

" Will you get Cameron a job — one of your salesmen — something of that sort? "

"Rather: he's a man. I didn't think he had it in him. I'll be jolly glad to do this. — And there's a little favor the Judge wants you to do us. Can we count on you? "

"Certainly. What is it? "

"Just a small subscription for a worthy object." The birdlike eyes twinkled. "Wait: you'll see."

Felton's dimples showed in a smile of relief for Cameron. "You can keep a secret," said he.

§ 4

In social Doncaster the night owns but two divisions: throughout the first, one says, "It's early yet; " throughout the second, "It's getting late." It was getting late now, although Tom had neither returned nor so much as telephoned, and Grigg, who maintained his sprightliness by plenty of sleep, went home, leaving judge and rector smoking in the Eighteen-Eighty parlor:

"Look here, Felton. Grigg and I were wondering this afternoon: you are one of the most zealous of our country-club patrons — do you — er — really enjoy the place? "

"I shouldn't know what to do without it." Felton's gratitude for Grigg's kindness winged him to verbal extravagance. He did, however, use the club — kept up his tennis and had long ago taken to golf: they were good for brain and body and furnished additional "points of contact" with the nominal members of his congregation.

"That is good — that is very good. Did you ever think of playing racquets? "

"Did you? " asked Felton, smiling.

The Judge patted his white waistcoat. "You are right: it mightn't hurt me."

His wife had, after all, momentarily left the chief burden

of "clearing off" to Alice. Mrs. Averell hovered in the hall in order to be near the telephone when news of her son's fatal accident should arrive. "Sherwood!" she admonished from the double-doorway's curtains.

"You prefer me as I am, my dear? Thank you. — No, I am scarcely an athlete, Felton. But you: do you think of playing racquets?"

Felton thought he might play. In the winter. "But there aren't any courts."

"Wait a moment. The new building-committee met today, and I attended — as chairman. It was decided to break ground for racquet-courts without any waste of time and, besides that, to open subscriptions for them and for a modern gymnasium, fully equipped, as well as to add a west wing to the old club-house with a ballroom on the ground floor: an extensive programme. Our building-fund is nil, but we are sure of the members' loyalty."

Felton moved uncomfortably. The Judge went on:

"It is going to be perfection, and yet all Doncaster-made from cellar-floors to roofs. Faegler is the architect and Kimball the contractor: both local men. They estimate it will cost — "

"Sherwood! " — Mrs. Averell did not think money should be mentioned in her parlor.

"My dear? " asked the Judge.

He meant that he wouldn't be stopped. His wife said something about seeing whether Alice had finished in the kitchen, but the Judge indicated his preference for Mrs. Averell's continued presence on the parlor-threshold. His cupid's-bow mouth broadened: here was something for which his enthusiasm could nearly obliterate worry over Tom.

"Everything we put up will be the best thing of its kind in the State, Felton. People will come here for tournaments. It will shame the neighbouring counties' country-clubs and

make Doncaster talked about in fresh circles. The Rotary is going to endorse the plan. Those courts alone are an object for the patriotic support of every one of our citizens, whether players or not — I might almost say whether club-members or not: I shan't play, of course, but I have headed the subscription with two thousand dollars — "

" Sherwood! "

" I am glad you approve, Elizabeth, although I knew you would. Grigg gave two thousand, too, and at once mentioned you, Felton. The subscribers' names and the amount each promises are to be published daily as pledged in the *Star-and-Post*."

The Judge's long experience in raising political campaign funds had been perfected by those methods of refined cruelty which war-time " drives " for government bond sales evolved in the smaller American communities. His fingers — they were those of an artist, oddly in contrast with all the rest of him — drew a paper from his heart:

" There is no hurry about actual payments — you make the terms to suit yourself, paying when convenient. You do not put down any money at first; you merely pledge yourself to a fixed sum. Everybody is going to give. I have had your approval, Felton; now I want you to write your name third on my list, directly under my own and Grigg's, for a sum that will set an example to all your parishioners."

Mrs. Averell fled. The rector felt that Alice had come into the hall.

" I'll be glad to do what I can — " Felton ran an index-finger half-way around his neck, between the clerical collar and the flushed skin behind it.

" Of course you will."

This was his Senior Warden, the controlling influence in his parish, among the controlling influences in Doncaster, one of the pair of voices that largely swayed St. John's

vestry. Felton again ran that troubled forefinger between neck and collar. It was an order from an employer.

" Only, you must understand that my income — "

The Judge owned a hearty laugh. He slapped Felton on a shoulder:

" Naturally. But you've no family-encumbrances — not yet — and we know you will do your proportionate share." He circled the centre-table; with his broad back to the doorway, he spread forth his subscription-list. " Give till it hurts! " He produced and uncovered his fountain-pen; he held it out across the table. " We all will. Alice is most delighted and as self-sacrificing as an exacting father can wish: she is going to pledge five hundred dollars out of her next year's allowance. You ought to be able to match her."

There had been a slight stir in the hall. Although the Judge's voice deafened him to it, his victim heard a stealthy sound at the front-door. Now, looking across the bent white head, Felton saw, through those parted curtains, the enflamed face of a slightly swaying young man to whom moved, with swift protection, a young woman. One of her strong arms, in ready realization, went about him; with silent speed, she led him toward the stairs. Tom had come home at last, and Alice was compassionately trying to get him up to bed before his parents could guess in what state he returned.

For a single instant the girl's gray gaze of wide distress met Felton's amazement. The gaze was an appeal: a free hand, flung toward him palm upwards, like a beggar's, made that appeal — though Heaven knew no additional emphasis was needed — irresistible.

" Well," said the Judge, " what — "

He was looking up. If he caught Felton staring toward the curtains, he would look around.

" Certainly I ought to match Alice's generosity," said the rector. His voice was loud, but only to hold attention and to drown any further noise from the hall. He, too, circled the table — stood beside his host. " John Felton," he wrote: " Five Hundred Dollars."

CHAPTER NINE

§ 1

EVEN at its richest, a Gothic church-building is no more than a casket for an altar, and, as there of course existed no such papist conjurer's-box in the Gothic First Presbyterian Church of Doncaster, its congregation always felt here a sense of emptiness, however many of them were present. They knew little of architecture, but this architect's design conducted their eyes along a splendid perspective only to bruise them upon an anticlimax: the perspective ended in a reading-stand and an uncomfortable chair with a pointed back and a red-plush seat. At 10.45 o'clock on the Sunday morning after Judge Averell's cold supper, that chair itself was empty.

A quarter to eleven: service was half an hour late. Mr. Slocum, the grocer, was there with his wife and children; the proprietor of the notion-store, and his offspring; the two leading druggists, and theirs — everybody that belonged, except the pastor and the pastor's family. The pastor's pew was unoccupied. Dr. Colfax, the dentist, engaged in perturbed whispers with the other elders at the rear of the church, while a buzz of conjecture swept the seated ranks: rumors of illness, bruit of accident.

Then Dr. Colfax came forward, manifestly hesitant. He mounted one of the three steps leading to the pastoral throne, but stopped at a respectful distance from it. He commonly cultivated an alleged likeness to President Coolidge, but he

seemed a nervous Mr. Coolidge today. He held an open letter, and it shook. He spoke without preface:

"We've got a communic — a message from Dr. Cameron. I'll read it."

He began, in another voice, to read. It was a voice so low that not the people in the front pews could hear him. Mr. Slocum cupped a hand about his better ear and pleaded:

"Louder, please!"

Dr. Colfax jumped, and his voice with him. It landed on a falsetto rung:

"'. . . sever relations cemented by so many years of love upon both sides.'" — Beza Cameron might speak broad Scots, but he wrote Presbyterian English. — "'Nevertheless, that is the Lord's will, and I surrender my pastorate for the following reasons.'"

The congregation caught breath in chorus. The wandering glance of Dr. Colfax descended to his highly polished shoe-tops.

"Those reasons," he murmured, "we have decided not to read at this time and place. The thing is that our pas — that Mr. Cameron has resigned in a way that it looks likely his resignation will have to be accepted, not only by us, but — "

"Louder please!" Mr. Slocum commanded.

Scarcely anybody noted the pastor's faded wife, who had crept in, by a side-door, to a back pew. She sat, sobbing softly. . . .

§ 2

Incense always made Courtie Litchfield's head ache, and St. Alban's was full of what he called "the holy smoke." It shrouded the chancel by a cloud so dense that the reredos — a memorial to Celeste's parents, one of whom had been born a Quaker and the other a Catholic — looked itself like

a gray mist; it rose to the vaulted roof, obscuring the conventionalized sunflowers there depicted, chosen emblems of the Anglican faith, and it descended low enough to enwreathe Courtie's plastered hair and yellow face, to sting his green eyes and to scent, he was sure, his waxed moustache for the rest of the day. Most of his forty-odd years he had devoted to his own pleasure, and this was unpleasant. He wanted to go away, but the man who marries money earns it: he was already afraid of his new wife.

She knelt beside him, who, hands deep in trousers-pockets, was seated with a negligence not forgetful of his clothes: Celeste Raymond that used to be, the jet black fringe of her bobbed hair just showing between a tight hat's edge and a swarthy neck, which a string of pearls encircled; her firm, rather broad, figure retained the air of the *belle sauvage*, but jeweled hands hid her face. Nearly everybody else was kneeling, among them Dora Zalokostas: a glance backward and across the aisle showed her to him. He looked away to a pair of kneeling youngsters, sons of mill-workers: he found children amusing, when they weren't possessive or sticky. Near him was a window that Celeste had put there: it showed, under crocketed canopy work, an Archangel Gabriel with an heraldic *busine* in his lowered hands — Celeste loved the face; Litchfield secretly thought it insipid.

Father Dinwiddie was almost invisible behind the smoke-screen; but through it came the intoned words:

" Therefore, with Angels and Archangels, and with all the Company of Heaven — "

On the artificial note of the ritualist, thought Litchfield: " Not much backbone."

Few of the makers of the Book of Common Prayer, from its first version in 1549 to its latest revision, would have recognized it as authority for this Communion Service in the Episcopal Church of St. Alban. In the form ordered by the

American Prayer Book, the rite resembles the Church of Scotland's more than that of the English Church, for it retains both oblation and invocation; but — as Crammer borrowed the *epiklesis* from the Orthodox Liturgy and then placed it ahead of the words of institution instead of after them — so Father Brethwald Dinwiddie, who faithfully believed in transubstantiation, for his part reverted to other ancient customs and even introduced the Lord's Prayer before communicating the laiety.

The organ, with what help a small choir could furnish, started the *Agnus Dei* from Gounod's *Seconde Messe des Orphéonistes*. The faithful, their hands clasped, their heads bowed, began to walk slowly toward the sanctuary-rail. Celeste rose and worked her way past her husband's angular knees.

"You going up?" he whispered.

She lifted her somewhat flattish, but altogether attractive, face. She always used a nearly saffron powder that intensified the gleam of brightly rouged lips. Her black brows drew together; her dark eyes shot remonstrance:

"Hush! You mustn't speak to me. — Yes: don't you remember I fasted this morning?"

He shrugged. He listlessly watched her red skirt that both covered and accentuated buttocks, hips and thighs as she went forward, her head bowed like the others', her hands also joined before her. Queer woman, he thought: she, too, believed.

He saw some of the other candidates for communion, her employees, draw respectfully aside, to make place for her — saw ascetic Dinwiddie like a ghost in Roman vestments pass, amid subsiding incense-wreaths, along the rail and administer to the reverent figures there. Head after head bent farther down; the priest's restrained lips moved —

And then, up there, it happened: that thing the possibility

of which had not so much as presented itself to Celeste Litchfield in her character of chief supporter of this parish and long-standing friend to the Bishop of the diocese.

She knew well enough how some Episcopal clergymen regarded most women civilly married to divorced men. Had she been asked, she would have supposed that the rector of St. Alban's shared this view; she would have supported him, in the case of another woman. But that was because other women's cases were pretty sure to be general and shady, whereas her own was spotless and special: spotless because she had married in New York and before a magistrate on account of the fact that she had personal acquaintance with no clergyman there, and that Courtlandt wanted speed and quiet; she would not have demeaned herself by consulting her spiritual adviser either before her wedding or before the present service, had she thought of so doing. In truth, she did not think of it: here a Raymond's word had ever been the word of decision — a Raymond's act, law. Yet — behold the incredible!

Father Dinwiddie backed away from her — started on toward the person upon her left. Celeste said something — the priest something else: nobody heard but those two, and of them neither at once understood the other. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastic shook his gray head — he resolutely passed her by. He had not forewarned her: took it for granted — she must know his views — that she would not present herself for Communion. — Now she, as living in adultery with a divorced man, had been refused the Sacrament.

She sprang to her feet. For a single instant, she stood glaring toward the priest, her fists clenched at her sides; but he devoted his regard to his ministrations, and she, while some of the communicants turned from the altar to stare — while all the people in the body of the church gaped con-

sternation — came down the aisle as a squall races over the sea.

"Get up! Come on out of this place!"

She barely paused at Courtie's side to say it, with tapping foot for punctuation. Between the twin rows of faces — all, except that of averted Dora Zalokostas, covertly entertained — he hurried with his wife into the placid street.

Her chauffeur — she made her chauffeur go to church — had grabbed his cap and stumbled out of a rear pew after his mistress. She pushed him aside:

"I'll drive myself. You walk. — Come on, Courtie."

Litchfield jumped to her in the attendant roadster. She jabbed its self-starter — was violent at the gears. They shot away.

"Turn you down?" inquired Courtie, who didn't pretend to know much about church affairs.

His wife's face was the storm as it bursts. "You've got eyes, haven't you?"

"Why'd he do it?"

She set her usually full lips to a thin line. "Because the old last-century fool doesn't believe in women marrying men that are divorced."

"Doesn't he?" Litchfield stretched out his legs as far as possible and wondered if any washing would clear his moustache of incense before dinner. "Oh, well! What if he don't? Ungrateful — when you support him. Still: rooster in his own hen-coop, I guess. Calm down, Sis — can't get the law on him for that."

But Celeste, to the peril of the angrily speeding car and an iron lamp-post, turned upon her husband a glance so black as to raise in him momentary sorrow for Father Dinwiddie. "Can't I? Yours isn't the only kind of law in America. — Now, don't dare to ask me another question till I get to my check-book and my letter-paper. I'm going to

make that minister-pensioner of mine wish he'd never heard my new name: I'm going to ruin him! "

§ 3

The last communicants had left the altar at St. Alban's. Father Dinwiddie turned to the congregation; he raised his thin palms in the conventional gesture:

" Go — the Mass is ended."

The choir sang the Roman response.

§ 4

At that same minute, Felton, his morning's service in St. John's having been as meagrely attended as usual, slowly disrobed in the vestry, sensible of this failure as but another step onward with some sort of deterioration long progressing: a logical step, though why logical, or what the cause or nature of the deterioration, he couldn't say. Religion was in heavy competition during these modern, if not altogether Modernist, days; the average individual found automobiles and the radio more interesting than Right, and bootleg gin than Wrong. It was as if such things came by seasons, beyond human control, almost beyond the power of human beings to make provision against their effects: Felton had been mentally snug and warm — once — sometime — and gradually the weather chilled to autumn, until now a frost fell.

How was he to get that money recklessly promised the Judge? Do what he would, he was always a little behind at the first of every month, when the bills came in: fifteen dollars — twenty. He would carry this deficit forward, and then, when a windfall made it up during the first fortnight, some unforeseen demand put him back again. His position

involved increasing donations to charity, particularly private charity, and his warm-heartedness prompted him to more. Besides, he had to keep up, socially, with the best people of his congregation, if only to maintain his usefulness therein: a clergyman mustn't be called a piker. Weddings helped, to be sure, and funerals; but they were not to be counted on. And here was a matter of five hundred —

Why, one reason that he could not expect a raise in salary lay in the Country Club's formidable Sunday-rivalry to St. John's. Felton liked sport as well as anybody and played the best tennis in town; but sport ought not to thin the ranks of the Church. The trouble was that to scold would only thin those ranks the further.

Judge Averell: Alice hadn't been at church this morning, and her absence added, somehow, to the rector's depression. Tom, of course, rarely appeared here now. — Would Tom end by making real trouble for his family? — The other night, Alice, whom Felton hadn't seen since, had mutely appealed to him to save Tom from detection, and Felton saved Tom by indicating a promise of five hundred dollars. Well, he was glad that he —

He turned from the thought.

He was worried about Cameron, too: had the given advice been altogether practical, and could the dominie make good at his age in what work Grigg gave him? Theoretically, compromise was wrong — but, practically, wasn't it sometimes necessary? Take Dinwiddie's dilemma. What would he do? What would Felton have done if thrust into it? A fundamental doctrine of Episcopalianism was its claim to an uninterrupted connection with the primitive Church and its consequent place in the visible Church Catholic today and forever. Did that imply adherence to the rule to which Dinwiddie had thus far adhered? Felton, who had thought little about it heretofore, now thought not. He remembered

having heard somewhere that the Orthodox Church — the Greeks and Russians and all those Eastern Christians — permitted remarriage after divorce, and the Orthodox Church antedated the Roman. Anyhow, the question was one of conduct, not of faith. He would probably have considered it from that point of view, if time didn't offer to consult Bishop Meeker. . . . Still, he was glad not to be in Dinwiddie's boots. If that Litchfield woman did sometime present herself for communion at St. Alban's, what would the poor fellow do?

Felton was tired: that was the matter. He wished that his mother could be waiting at the rectory, as she used to wait, with her tremulous smile of welcome: her pride in him his comfort. If, for some while — he did not know just how long — his tasks within the chancel had not, though regularly accomplished, possessed the attraction for him that was held by the tasks outside it — if the words of the service were less charming than once, and sermon-delivery, not to mention sermon-composition, a trial — if these duties had become formidably formal, he labored with a will, and twice as hard, at all others. Hard, and there, anyhow, successfully. Parochial calls, visits to the sick, the church-guilds, vestry-meetings, Sunday School, Bible Class, confirmation-class: not least of all, the thorny choir-dissensions — for white-robed women under mortar-boards sang in St. John's choir beside white-robed men and boys: with these he was busied from morning until late night. No wonder his eloquence was gone, his zeal at church-services diminished. He was as much over-worked as he was underpaid — and yet people thought a clergeman's life an easy one!

There was always some silly woman hanging around after service: one of those unhappy creatures that fall into hysteria over a clergyman and call it falling in love, marine

mines sewn across the course of every minister. Felton sailed discreetly.

"Zeller," he asked the entering sexton, "is the church empty?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Tenny not there?"

"No, sir."

"Nor Mrs. Rice?"

"Everybody's gone, Mr. Felton."

Everybody: there had been but the merest handful! "Look under the pews!"

The rector slipped out of the vestry-door and into the sunlight of the old burying-ground. He meant to follow a certain winding path among the graves to the rectory.

§ 5

One bit of the churchyard was nearly cut off from view of the street. It lay in an embrasure of the church's brick wall bearing a window raised years ago to the memory of the Judge's father, and in this recess stood the square, flat-topped tomb of that elder Averell. Against it, his granddaughter was leaning.

"You? — This is a surprise."

"Pleasant?"

"Very."

Felton looked it. His round face dimpled, his brown eyes shone. Suddenly, he wasn't tired any more.

"It's not a surprise for me," she said: "I came here to see you."

A girl at a grave — but she did not have to fear the sunshine. As if to prove this, she had taken off her wide hat of limp straw and laid it on that marble slab, where it hid all except a few words of the inscription:

Willi.....ell
Son.....
18.....;

then a complete eclipse of the dead man's recorded virtues, followed by the words:

" Steadfast In The Faith."

Light streamed over her from midheaven. She wore a jacket and short skirt of creamy voile, with creamy stockings and shoes. In her cheeks the pink triumphed over the olive; her blue-black hair, drawn down to frame the face, was radiant. — for what purpose could such a creature, Felton marvelled, attend his arrival here?

" That was good of you."

" Wait till you've heard why. I didn't want to go to church before I'd seen you alone, and I didn't want to call at the rectory — yet. I wanted to see whether you were going to keep my secret."

" Your secret? " Felton's soft black hat was in his hands; they crushed it.

" Yes; my secret — or yours and mine."

" Of course I'll keep it." — He was a Grigg for that. Delightful to share any secret with her! — " Only hadn't you better tell me," he smiled, " what it is? "

She gave him her wide gray eyes with their dark pupils.

" About Tom."

" Oh! "

" I knew you'd keep it till I did see you — till I'd explained. The way I looked at you from the hall — waved to you — committed you — you were wonderful about it; but it wasn't fair of me, asking like that, to count on your keeping quiet forever. And, sooner or later, I'd have to see you — "

" Thanks," said Felton drily.

Amid the embarrassment that swept on the flood of her sudden explanation, she laughed softly, a little forlornly. " Don't pretend you misunderstand. I knew I'd have to see you anyhow, sooner or later, and — well, I've made it sooner, you see."

" But " — if he saw, it was as yet very imperfectly — " what made you think I was a gossip? "

" I didn't. I didn't think you'd tell everybody. I only mean that I remembered you were a clergyman — and so, unless I could make you feel about it the way I do, your conscience would worry you at keeping father — because he's Tom's father — in the dark."

In this respect, the rector's conscience hadn't worried him a bit. When he saw the thing in the hall, he felt only sorrow for the girl and a quick desire to help her — perhaps also an impulse to avoid a general unpleasantness. Since then, he had once or twice hoped that Tom, for the boy's own sake and his parents', would put a brake upon himself before smashing into open disaster; yet Alice had so competently taken the immediate affair in hand that Felton's other thoughts about it were thoughts of admiration and pity for her. He was on the point of saying so, when she lifted her gaze again; then he saw how much she took for granted: his was the cure of his people's souls, and the Judge and the Judge's wife and Tom were among those people. The implication was too candidly made, too much as a matter-of-course. He blushed for his fault — admit it, he couldn't. He could merely ask:

" Do you think I ought to speak to Tom? "

" Not Tom! He's like most people. If you say ' Don't ' to him, it only makes him want to do."

" Or your father? "

" I don't think so, but I'm not a clergyman. What I want

to do is to make you see that, even as a clergyman, you can leave it to me."

He had been standing before her. Now, his round face smiling again, he leaned beside her against the tomb.

"Well," he challenged, "make me."

She did not know that the feat was already accomplished. Her unusual embarrassment had gone, but she was tremendously in earnest:

"He told me all about it, next day. It wasn't so bad as it looked. It wasn't as if there'd been only one girl with him."

"A girl?"

"No: two girls — Dora Zalokostas and Justine Dinwiddie." Full sunlight revealed all of the sister's frankness. "There is safety in numbers, you know. Tom had a hip-flask, and those girls wouldn't take a drink till he promised to drink all the rest. Of course it was silly — of course he oughtn't to have had it — but he did have it, and he's just at the age where he can't stand a girl's saying he can't stand a few drinks."

At what age, Felton inquired of himself, was this clear-eyed philosopher? Somehow, anyhow, she impressed him as far better able to deal with such affairs than he was. Still:

"That seems to be a dangerous period." The dimples played in the brown field of Felton's face. "Does it last long?"

"I'm sure Tom's nearly over it — and it won't be dangerous, now that I'm back. I understand him; father and mother don't. People over thirty-five oughtn't to bring children into this world, no matter how dear people they are."

Those dimples deepened. "You think so?"

"I know it. I saw it in my work down South, and here I can see it in my own home. They're too old to understand

them — and father and mother were both lots over that when Tom was born."

"And haven't grown a day younger ever since?"

"Please don't joke!"

"I'm not joking." Nor was he! "I'm merely thinking —"

"But," she went on, "it will be all right about Tom, now I am here. He's young: that's all. It's happened only once or twice before, he says, and I believe him. And I know it'll never happen again. He's too ashamed of himself and too grateful to me for smuggling him safe in bed and asleep before they ever knew he'd come back."

"There was the next morning."

"He told them he hadn't wanted to disturb you and father" — she put it bravely — "and that was the truth, too."

"I can believe it was."

"Of course I scolded him."

Felton looked at her. "That's harder to believe," his politeness said, but not his judgment of her character.

Just then, however, that character showed itself only compassionate. The rector had pushed light courtesy a hairsbreadth too far, and she mistook it for a sense of amused superiority. Pride he had guessed her to possess in no small degree; he would not have guessed that she could sink it as she sank it now. The oval of her pink-and-olive face was upturned to his, full of her appeal; in her eyes was a solicitation deeper than even that which she had flung him from the hallway when he saw her with her brother in her arms.

"You must look at this as I do," she said. "Tom will go straight hereafter: I promise that. You don't know father, really. If mother found this out, it would about kill her, and if father found it out, it would hurt him awfully — but he'd hurt Tom more. Father's a darling, and I love him;

but he's a hard man, too, and, no matter how easy he seems outside his profession, once he thinks anybody — anybody — has done something that's really wrong — that one of us has done something that isn't right as a child of his — or that would reflect on him — he's — he's — " Her fingers, adroit, but fine, like the Judge's, worked together; the mezzo-soprano broke. — " Oh, I make myself responsible for Tom! — Please! "

Was there a mist of tears in her gray eyes? Felton's heart accused him:

" But, Alice, you're all mistaken! You say I misunderstand you. It's you who don't understand me. Of course I'm not going to tell your father. Perhaps I ought to have thought about doing it; if I'd tried Tom and failed, I might have thought about doing it. I didn't — and now I see it all the way you do. Keep Tom straight, Alice — and forget I ever saw anything. I'll forget, too."

§ 6

As they walked through the sunshine among the graves, Grigg passed jauntily down street. His birdlike eyes caught the pair; he cocked his head between the railings:

" 'Lo, Alice! — 'Lo, Felton! Cameron's chucked it, but old Dinwiddie's standing fast: he gave the new Mrs. Litchfield the bird when she popped up for communion this morning. It's not the open season for you parsons yet, Felton; but Celeste's a jolly clever woman, and when she's around, your Bishop Meeker can't call his soul his own: in the long run, she always get what she wants — not sometimes, but always. You'll see! "

BOOK THREE: Dora

BOOK THREE: Dora

CHAPTER TEN

§ 1

THE first work Celeste Raymond had undertaken on inheriting her father's house was, very sensibly, to have that well-nigh historic building "done over," and the primary expression of this process proved to be a breakfast-room flung out from the south wing atop a hill crest toward which the body of the edifice hesitantly climbed. One wall was glass; it gave a pleasant view of terraces near at hand, of the river below and of the pine-hooded heights on the river's other side. Toward these Litchfield's really myopic green eyes gazed at nine o'clock one morning while he smoked the Egyptian cigarette he always smoked before drinking his morning-coffee. He couldn't see the view, and he didn't care for landscapes anyhow, but he felt it necessary to seem interested in the outlook because his swarthy wife was herself so brazenly interested in one among her letters.

Presently she said "Read that," and, with a glint of diamonds, tossed it to him. Courtie took it up in hands none too steady, and obeyed. It was headed, in purple ink and Old English characters, "Bishop's House," with the name of the episcopal city following, and ran:

"My Dear Mrs. Litchfield:

"Quite too bad of me to have put off wishing you joy in your marriage until you, on your part, should have placed me under the deep obligation — me and the entire diocese

— which you do now place me under, and it, by your kind letter, with enclosure, of recent date! The formal resolution of thanks, excerpted from the minutes of the Committee, is being duly engrossed and will go to you under separate cover. I merely take this opportunity to utter, very inadequately, my personal word of enthusiastic thanks. Your magnificently generous gift has already, at your suggestion, been applied to paying off the Grigg mortgage on our Diocesan Boys' School, and — as you will see and, I hope, graciously approve — the Committee, at my suggestion, proposes to rename our Administration Building 'Litchfield Hall.' We are quite open to other suggestions, in case you prefer 'Celeste Litchfield' or 'Raymond Hall,' the latter in memory of your dear father and my dear friend.

"My health having this year prevented me from conducting many confirmations at the more usual seasons, I propose, as you have probably heard, to confirm classes in Doncaster on the Feast of the Transfiguration. When I pay that pastoral visit to your city, I hope you will give me the opportunity of meeting your husband, and of expressing in person something of the gratitude that I feel for your munificence. As often of old, you have made the diocese your debtor — and this time more heavily than ever.

"My felicitations to you and my congratulations to your husband, as well as Mrs. Meeker's warmest good wishes for you both, go herewith. My prayers for your joint happiness rise daily to God.

"Believe me, my dear Mrs. Litchfield, ever

"Your faithful Bishop,
"WILFRED AUGUSTUS."

Courtie let the missive fall from his yellow fingers:
"Must 'a' given him some wad!"

"Don't I always bet the limit?" Celeste's lips showed twin rows of strong, even teeth.

"How much this hand?"

"Fifteen thousand." While Litchfield's mouth puckered into a low whistle, his wife went on: "It was a bargain, Courtie — believe me."

Half of Doncaster — the post-war half, which didn't know her — thought Celeste Litchfield whipped; the other half, recalling her influence with Bishop Meeker, enlarged its guesses at Father Dinwiddie's punishment's delay. Celeste said nothing; she had a canonical right to appeal to the Bishop; that would wait. She continued her church-going, although she did not again present herself for Communion; she brought her tired husband with her — sat in the old Raymond pew beside the archangel window — brought with her also, on certain separate occasions, the "Low" Episcopal rector from nearby Americus and the lower Episcopal rector from Monroe, whom she had helped in diocesan conventions and for whom she gave a rather select dinner — made her chauffeur attend services, and Dora Zalokostas and all the vestry and that nine-tenths of the regular congregation who were, in effect, the marvelling work of her hands. Only, when Father Dinwiddie bowed to her in the street — for he continued so to do, as a man to a woman — she lifted her saffron face high and turned her dark eyes away.

"You know, Miss Ray — Mrs. Litchfield —" Dora had ventured to say to her, because Dora alone saw that Celeste was unhappy and really, despite too human impulses to the contrary, felt sorry — "you know, my church lets people have two divorces and three weddings."

But Dora's only reward was the meeting of black brows, the flash of scornful eyes. "Your church? What d'you mean — your church?"

"Why" — the Russian-Greek drew about her that cloak

which it was so ridiculous to wear in Summer; the curling lashes wavered above the Hellenic eyes — "the Orthodox, you know, Miss — Mrs. Litchfield."

"You're an American," said Celeste, "and an Episcopalian — or, at least, you're going to be one. You don't expect me to join that foreign church, do you? Mind your own affairs, Dora, and get into the confirmation-class." — But she said it kindly at the last. — "As for me, I was born an Episcopalian, and you can bet all the salary I'll ever pay you I'm going to die one."

§ 2

Courtlandt Litchfield's wife had twenty thousand dollars to give away, this quarter, or to reinvest for her own benefit. Three thousand she signed over to the Doncaster Hospital, whose Board of Managers, in a moment of rare courage, had successfully backed another candidate for the presidency of the Ladies' Auxiliary, and whom she had, therefore, every reason to dislike. Two thousand more went, quite secretly, for the relief of local "cases" that any organized charity would have shunned — which fact Celeste properly accepted as evidence of their good deserts. The remaining fifteen thousand was the sum her old friend Bishop Meeker gratefully acknowledged on behalf of a cause near to his heart.

There are many people kindly with the left hand and rigid with the right. Celeste had been grievously wounded, in her pride a great deal, but otherwise, too: her religion, her faith in human gratitude. She believed the great Sacrament of her faith: it had been refused her, without inquiry, when she felt sure that her marriage was an exceptional case, and when the granting or refusal lay within the discretion of an individual priest. She had supported Dinwiddie's church for years: here, as she saw the affair, she was bitten by jaws

that she had liberally fed. Sincerely convinced, she declared the cruelest of struggles, a Holy War.

On his side, Courtie liked a game: any game, if it only held, as his wife's present pursuit certainly did, the sporting element. His quondam qualms in regard to Father Brethwald had evaporated. The lawyer — after all, he did rent a waiting-room and a private office in James Street and was properly presented at the county bar — merely wished his wife would vouchsafe him a bit more of her confidence. Now he took his eyes from the direction of the evergreen hills, toward which, because Celeste loved them, his gaze had mechanically reverted. He said:

"If this Bishop-fellow's coming to town for a what's-its-name, hadn't you better ask him to stop with us?"

Did the dusky-browed Mrs. Litchfield recall that season when she had pictured herself as a Bishop's wife with Bishop Meeker across the breakfast-table from her? Well, Mrs. Meeker had, long ago, recovered — gave promise, these days, of surviving her husband; but Celeste was no woman to drop a useful friend simply because prevented from marrying him by circumstances of which not the most foreseeing of human beings could command control. Even if the unnecessarily craven Bishop would not risk an overnight visit at her house, she maintained, on her side, amicable relations with him — had here and now, or just there and then, put him, as he delightedly admitted, far in her debt.

"It would be too obvious if we had him stop here," she said; "but we can give him an *intime* dinner or lunch — the more *intime* the better. I'll write to him this morning — and not say anything more to him for a while. And — oh, yes — he likes to tell nigger stories, Courtie: you be sure you laugh at them."

§ 3

Felton's letters, when egregious Sally flung them on his lonely breakfast-table not long later, were less gratifying. He fingered them: bills.

Disheartening. One had to live up to one's parish, yet no parish quite furnished the means. That was the constant plaint whenever and wherever the clergy of the diocese assembled. A good place was no more advantageous than a poor one: in neither did the salary take account of the imperturbably expected extras. You had your choice between being popular at the price of extravagance and being unpopular at the price of your job: debt and stay, or pay and get out.

Well —

And here was a formal notification from the country club's building-committee. About that subscription. Five hundred dollars! The *Star-and-Post* had printed it; many people besides Alice praised him: their praise was not so sweet as hers, and now came this polite hint that the first installment, one-half the total sum, would be immediately acceptable. Pay when you liked, indeed!

Where would he get it?

The trust-company? — The trust-company's clerks talked too much: it wasn't well (Bishop Meeker didn't like it) for a clergyman to be known to have notes of this sort at —

Gee-gee Hornaday? — A member of the vestry, and hard as nails.

The Judge? — Vestryman, too, and Alice's father.

Grocer Slocum had money, but he was a Presbyterian, and Felton patronized an Episcopal groceryman — for policy.

Grigg? — John wouldn't like to borrow from even the most friendly of anti-Christians.

He had to go to a session of the Ministerial Association

in the Methodist parsonage. He would drop in at the Monroe Trust Company Building and see if his account was as desperate as his check-book's stubs proclaimed: not that a slight error among his accounts could help much, but he always hoped for it. . . .

He was just leaving the bank, having confirmed his fears, when he encountered Celeste, who issued from her limousine to attend a directors' session. She had had herself elected a member of the trust-company's governing-board and, as she owned most of the stock, she managed the managers.

"Hello, Mr. Felton."

They had met, of course, often: what he could never get over was her ability to make him feel as if each meeting were their first. Contradictorily, she effected it by a sheer assumption of intimacy so unwarranted as to present her always in a new, and high, light: he might but marvel, this time, at how unlike she seemed to Alice Averell, and at how, through truth to some invisible self, Celeste was never twice the same in his eyes.

"Hello, Mr. Felton," she said again — and held out her hand.

For all its jeweled fripperies, it was a firm hand. Beautifully cared for, too. Unlike other Doncaster women, Mrs. Litchfield's nails — they were long and pointed and magenta — shone. Even had you not noticed her palms before, when you shook hands with her you felt that they were roseate. Let her be as influential with the Bishop as she chose, the clergyman mistrusted Celeste — yet he couldn't rein his smile.

"What's," she asked, "the matter with St. John's?"

He blushed. He wished he wouldn't always blush when she put her customarily blunt queries to him:

"Nothing that I know of."

"Yes, there is. Half your paper-congregation doesn't

show up at services. You need some fresh blood there. One of these days, perhaps, I'll make up my mind to give you mine."

He received from somewhere, but certainly not from her, a hint that she meant to hurt him, not out of social sadism — for all sadism is commoner among blondes — rather out of an obscure and even less edifying reason quite beyond his conjecture. To disarm him? He didn't know, but, anyhow, he wouldn't show his wound:

"A transfusion?"

"You can call it anything you like."

Her eyes, brilliant at such moments, appraised him. Where were his ready words — the well that used ever to be full?

Powerful Celeste Raymond at weakening St. John's! But of course she mustn't. —

Questionably married Celeste Litchfield! But of course he would not!

Alarmingly he heard himself say:

"We'll be glad to have you visit us now and then."

She owned a gesture to put all this sort of thing out of court: a downward sweep of her bare right arm with its beringed hand at an acute angle. Except that Celeste's earth-pointing fingers were outspread, much thus had Roman empresses inverted their thumbs above the arena:

"There's nothing to that, Mr. Felton. We understand each other. But never mind — just now."

She left him, going into the bank. He said to his heart that he could not at all guess what she meant.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

§ 1

DINWIDDIE, Felton repeated for the hundredth time, should have had his bishop's advice before committing himself to that rash refusal of which all the town still chattered. Moreover, he should have anticipated the need of this advice. Counsels of perfection are very well, but — if not where faith, at least where practice, was concerned — such a thing did exist as compromise. Anyhow, what were bishops for? The Episcopal Church had been erected upon the Episcopal theory. Dinwiddie, to be sure, was fond of quoting — How'd it go? —

"Our communion ranks with those of the Orthodox East and that of Rome, a coequal member of the trio of great historical divisions of the Church Catholic."

Yes, of course. But, among Episcopalians, or anyhow in matters such as this, practice decided that the voice of the Church, unless otherwise unmistakably uttered, lay with one's bishop. There might be some question about the unbroken Apostolic Succession in Anglican orders; regarding that there had long oddly been two bitterly opposing schools within the Episcopal Church itself, and Felton had latterly concluded that nothing so obscure could very much count; yet the powers of bishops as his denomination had ever accounted them were at least as old as Clemens Romanus, St. Peter's disciple. The rector of St. John's had heard the Rt. Rev. Wilfred Augustus Meeker, D.D., S.T.D., say so — and everybody knew that the Anglican sect in America owned its one unique quality among Protestants, as truly as its name, to the fact that it was verily Episcopal.

No use confusing this with the Cameron case, about which the town was also excited. Cameron, having denied what he considered a fundamental Presbyterian doctrine, honorably left the Presbyterians; Dinwiddie, on a mere question of ritualistic procedure, refused to seek authority at its source, alienated his sole puissant parishioner, and stood pat — entirely different. Besides, Cameron had a job, was already a travelling-salesman for one of Grigg's concerns — the umbrella factory — whereas the Dinwiddie-Litchfield issue remained undecided. Celeste now kept away from church and, while overtly doing nothing, conveyed a sense of secretly malign activity: gossip about Justine increased in violence; a story was whispered to the effect that her father, doubting the validity of his orders, had, like some other Episcopal clerics, obtained clandestine ordination from a bishop of the Old Catholics in Pittsburgh or Chicago; an ominous and increasing portion of St. Alban's congregation followed the new example — perhaps the fiat — of their employer and passed their Sundays at home. Meanwhile, Father Brethwald (why had he persuaded his people to call him "Father"?) went on as if nothing else did: said his garbled version of the Latin Mass to a handful, with music by a choir whose pay was already in arrears; preached at pews wellnigh empty; taught a confirmation-class of three girls.

Poor Dinwiddie! Felton, who had never cared much for him, was sorry for him now — would go to see him this evening. If there were no means of lessening Celeste's influence with the Bishop, there must at least be some way 'round — some way of placating her.

He compared her with the women of St. John's. Walking to that session of the Ministerial Association, he compared her, quite deliberately, with Alice Averell.

§ 2

His pulse quickened. What was occurring within him about Alice?

Although never mentioned, the secret he and she shared had become a tie. He assumed Tom to be doing better; Tom's sister was happy. She was not only grateful to Felton; she appeared sincerely to admire him, even in his extra-clerical character:

" It was wonderful of you to give that five hundred to the country club! "

" You mean ' promise ' it."

" Where's the difference? "

Most people born well-to-do are aware of merely three financial grades in society: the very rich, themselves, and the very poor. Alice had seen the poverty of Carolina " po' whites "; she possessed not the smallest conception of what money means to this world's Feltons. If there were occasions when that embarrassed him, there were others when it flattered. Being St. John's rector, he was received everywhere, of course; but Alice's manner received him for himself, frankly admitting him as from birth a member of her own caste, which his little mother had once lost, longed always to regain, and died in the grateful faith that he had indeed recovered. Besides, almost all the rest of the time, except when her cool estimate of him frightened him, Alice was the serene antithesis of a Celeste: but Alice was become the greatest help and comfort in the parish.

Alice!

She rubbed away so many rough corners with her commonsense and her diplomacy, used in her position as her father's daughter. There had been dangerous feuds in both of St. John's women's guilds: Alice settled each by luncheon-parties at the Averell house, where the question of which

should take the blame for dishes broken and the criticism of each other's arrangement of the parish-house supper impedimenta were buried — at least temporarily — under her soothing influence. The choir's chief contralto — Mrs. Erdman, a Theosophist — used to be belligerently jealous of its leading feminine soprano, who was the Christian Science Irma Olin: Alice joined the choir and made them, while she was about, friends of each other by making them her own golf-companions. In a dozen particulars, Felton was gladly dependent on her justified self-reliance. He had heeded that complaint of the Connecticut churchman who said that " as soon as a student got a cassock he wanted a petticoat "; but now —

Alice!

He saw again with his mind's eye, as the eyes of his body saw daily, her gray-blue gaze, her blue-black hair, the oval of her pink-and-olive face with its frank smile, that healthful figure of an athlete, that wholesome manner of —

Was he falling in love? . . .

" What's the matter with St. John's? "

Celeste's quick question drove itself again into his mind. He almost wished that the Litchfields were his parishioners: St. John's needed people like Celeste — people that got things done. Alice — yes; but if Celeste, alone, had kept St. Alban's alive, what would her presence not add to St. John's?

For something was the matter. Throughout Doncaster, the better class of people liked him. He was always given, on committees for municipal celebrations or charities, a place of dignity, and among his own parishioners the few poor appreciated what help he furnished, which was ever his utmost, while the many well-to-do, even if they mostly didn't attend services, and even if the vestry made no mention of a salary-advance, followed Alice's lead: they quite accepted

him as a pleasant one of themselves. Outside the church-building, his hard work made him a church-success; but inside those walls — there was no blinking it — he had simply, as Justine Dinwiddie might put it, lost his pep.

How would Alice put it? She must, with those clear eyes of hers, see it. And could she, if housed within the rectory's walls, put it right?

He had thought unkindly of the exiguous confirmation-class at St. Alban's: considering the listed strength of St. John's parish, its class was little better. Nine persons. The Bishop wouldn't like that; he had complained about a similar paucity last year. Yet, this year, Felton had exhausted every ingenuity, worn out his last powers of conciliation, to increase the class number. Moreover, he found their instruction as tedious as his work outside was stimulating. They asked questions he couldn't answer off hand; he was forced to postpone replies until the next meeting. It involved — it always had involved — a lot of dull research, and he believed the queries to be propounded more out of politeness than anything else, anyway: the candidates assumed an interest that they really didn't feel.

And his bills. . . . Especially this contribution to the country club. He didn't go near the country club any more. Couldn't.

As he rang at the Methodist parsonage, there escaped from his lips a breath of weariness. He really did like the members of the Ministerial Association; but there was something about them that he couldn't understand — an atmosphere he couldn't pierce. Often he felt as if they were holding back from him an essential truth about themselves — occasionally that they were hiding such a truth from one another.

§ 3

He was late, and they chaffed him, with heavy humor, for a gnawing neglect of things spiritual: brisk Edgar Katz, the Lutheran; Baptist Harry Weir of tawny mane; Embick, the Reformed minister, whose black lounge-suit a tiny gold cross relieved, dangling, like a trinket, from a watch chain; plump, complacent Ivins, their Wesleyan host — they filled the room with the impression that they were all anxious to appear business men, club men — anything save clergymen. Stewart was among them: Cameron's hurriedly procured successor — he wore blue clothes and the air of a wise district attorney, perpetually smiling; his desk at home displayed ever one of the books by the new personalities in religion, but he neither preached nor talked of what he read.

The Association gossiped.

"My wife's doctor, who's a ladies' specialist" — that purring voice belonged to Ivins, who rubbed his fat hands together — "he told me in confidence. . . . I'm informed that there's a house on Watts Street. . . ."

Of course, it was only in seeking a remedy that they discussed the moral diseases of Doncaster; but Felton's brown face was distracted. Where was that money to be found?

Stewart might have enlightened John concerning the puzzling quality in his fellow-members of the Association. Stewart knew.

Although Felton belonged to that large body of clerics which is as mentally aloof from theology as it is from theology's enemies, and for whom the material parish duties almost necessarily dwarf others, his friends here, belonging to the more restless sects, had, as has been indicated, each done some clandestine study of the new ideas and had all been affected by them. The old-fashioned materialist they would have unanimously condemned as a blasphemer; but, in these

new volumes and magazines, here were supposed scholars of their denominations uttering liberal exegeses of doctrine for men conscious of their own intellectual inferiority — doctors of divinity who offered revolutionary definitions with a manner breathlessly devout.

So, little as John guessed it, most of these pastors read until they were scared, and then stopped just short of practical trouble. Stewart might say to himself that a church's creed was unintended for detailed literal acceptance by every subscriber — Embick might explain to his secret heart theory of the Atonement in terms of symbol — privately, Ivins could reject the Resurrection, and Katz all miracle — Weir was able, in his own terms, mutely to paraphrase the statement that Incarnation means rather the inspiration of man by diffusion of divine gifts than the entrance of Deity into human conditions and experience: that, if Jesus said anything about being "equal to the Father," the phrase must be understood as applying to moral character, not to essential being. But no one of the students considered open affirmation wise; not only in their pulpits, here among themselves it was safer to talk of other things.

"Cameron's worries are ofer, anyhow," said Embick with a bite at his bristling moustache: "most volks mebbie don't go to church, but, all, they need a furnace when it's zero."

"Soft," said Weir. "Pretty soft."

Felton roused himself. "Cameron only stood by his convictions."

But the Baptist shook his leonine locks. "You'll notice he lit on his feet, all right!"

"It seems hardly delicate," smiled Stewart, looking up from the glare of the green-and-purple rug that covered the Ivins parlor-floor, "to discuss my impulsive predecessor in my presence."

"Well, then, there's Dinwiddie," John suggested.

"Oh, you Episcopalians, Felton!" said Weir. "I beg your pardon, but you know yourself all he's done is give a demonstration of how anybody can be anything in your church as long as he — I mean she — picks the right minister. No harm'll happen to Mrs. Litchfield."

There it was: Dinwiddie and Cameron; two men, each true to the individual light within him, and each thereby bringing contumely not only on himself, but upon his sect! John sought refuge in thought of Alice. . . .

The others branched off to church-mortgages. Nearly all of their establishments had mortgages: they provided on all occasions a most fruitful theme.

"We might learn a lesson there from the Catholics," ventured Felton. "They won't consecrate a church till it's debt-free, and they'll hold services in a crypt till they've got the money in hand to build the next story."

"Only, I'm told" — Ivins got up and straightened a vividly colored picture that hung between the front windows — "I'm told the reason Father Barry didn't stay long in his crypt was because he raised funds by threats of overtime in Purgatory."

"Hadn't we better get down to business?" inquired brisk Mr. Katz. . . .

John realized what a helpmeet Alice would be to him. Then he upbraided himself for thinking too much upon the material side of his romance.

The others had interrupted Embick's enthusiastic account of his Boy Scouts troop. They were pointing out that there must be something wrong with Dinwiddie because he had a wild daughter. . . .

The money —

The confirmation-class —

What was it Cameron had said about these new fellows and how Katz and Embick would follow their lead? For

all their breezy familiarity with the Apostles, to whom they referred as "Peter" and "James" and "Paul," their care was not to teach the truth as their separate sects still theoretically held it: their care was to make their churches what, in their swaggering adoption of business parlance, they called "going concerns."

"It's politics that's to blame," said Weir. "The politicians want votes. They get 'em by letting the police wink at vice. When vice is in free competition with the churches, what chance have the churches got, anyhow? And everybody knows who's the real political boss of this town: it's your man Averell, Felton."

§ 4

John made two calls on his way home. For the former, he had to trample reluctance; to the latter he rushed with a desperate courage.

"Why no, old thing," said Grigg, his birdlike eyes beaming benevolence and his voice as cheerful as if he were carelessly granting instead of refusing, the request just stumblingly made him; "of course the amount's no great fry, but the fact is I just this minute laid out the last loose money I'll have for a fortnight. Rum, what?"

Felton admitted that it was rum.

"See here, though," said Grigg: "you try Litchfield."

"Litchfield?"

"Litchfield: that's your book. He dropped in here this morning about some investments, and I spoofed him over Dinwiddie, and he said you were worth a hundred Dinwiddies and wondered if you didn't need help. Litchfield's a keen one at guessing things, but he's not such a blighter as I used to think. Look him up: you'll see."

§ 5

Litchfield belonged among those rare men who can seem at home even at their own offices. When his pretty stenographer announced Felton, the sallow lawyer rose from a negligent position and a French novel, and welcomed his caller as he might have welcomed an old friend. He simplified everything:

"Scissor the explanation — Grigg's 'phoned. Confidentially, of course. Little matter of some jack? Glad to oblige."

This man with the green eyes and waxed moustaches had a delightfully casual manner. He must, the rector reflected, lend money far more frequently than he drew a brief. Hadn't Felton been told, somewhere, that the lawyer had come to the rescue of Hiram Upp's ice-company?

"Of course I'm not anxious to have this thing generally known — "

"Sure not. Confidential transaction."

Anyhow, it was concluded in an incredibly short time, and John's note was flung carelessly into a wire-basket among the unanswered letters.

One thousand dollars: John had thought he might as well make it for that, especially as it didn't in the least incommode the lender. Ninety days.

"But you can renew as often as you please. Don't like my investments to mature too fast, Mr. Felton. Nuisance — have to reinvest. Get me? "

§ 6

A relief, but any note was a note: interest had to be paid, even to the Litchfields of life who were unconcerned as to principal. John deposited his money and, going home, im-

mediately drew against it; he himself posted a check for the entire sum promised the country club. Now he would go out there for tennis; he had been getting soft.

He did not go, however. He met the postman, and the postman handed him over a single letter. It was from Bishop Meeker:

> "... expect ... larger confirmation-class ... this visitation. The last ... only eight. St. John's ... should not ... an irreducible minimum ... present less than ten. ..."

Felton crushed the paper in his fist and returned to his study.

"Irreducible minimum!"

Meeker meant it, too. All the clergy of the diocese had been making talk about his aging and hardening: even his fount of anecdotes had frozen. That was the kind of bishop he was: carrying you along as gently as a canal for years, may be, and then — Felton's figures of speech were more slipshod than of yore — coming down on you like a ton of bricks. This was an order: disobedience would mean the start of serious trouble; obedience was impossible.

The rector of St. John's reviewed his recent efforts. Noting that certain and distinctly novel coolness from the diocesan centre, hadn't he combed his parish till his hand ached? He had accepted contralto Mrs. Erdman's statement that one could remain a Theosophist and become an Episcopalian — soprano Irma Olin's about a similar synthesis of Anglicanism and Christian Science. Every merely nominal member of his congregation was long ago canvassed, even to the braving of Tom Averell's ridicule. — John recalled bitterly the time when he thought he could do a dignified and helpful work in Doncaster!

" Irreducible minimum! "

Was Meeker expecting him to proselyte from the erring sects of his fellow-members in the Ministerial Association? That sort of thing wasn't done nowadays, no more than doctors stole one another's patients; it wasn't professional etiquette, or Christianity.

" Irreducible minimum! "

But if he didn't do something, and do it quickly — oh, he knew Meeker! — the end of his usefulness in this diocese was visible. The —

" Irreducible minimum! "

CHAPTER TWELVE

§ 1

WHEN she disapproved of a caller, Sally invariably preceded announcement by counsel. At the study-door, on this hot afternoon of the early August days, words came out of her wrinkled face as crackling sounds issue from ruffled parchment:

"If you're real busy, I wouldn't see her. She ain't one o' ourn: she belongs to Dinwiddie's."

Felton wasn't busy, but he was tired, though not of body. For the last half-hour he had been too tired to go on with the writing of a sermon in which, he felt, there was nothing to say except things he had said monotonously often before. His brown eyes, as he lifted them, were dull:

"Somebody has called?"

"One o' them Asiatics. It's that there dago stenographer at the Raymond mills."

"Miss Zalokostas?"

"That's her — only I can't say it." Sally was a Miss Knrahnopfer. "They'd ought to take American names. Everybody jus' called her 'Dora' 'fore Celeste Raymond got ahold of her, anyhow."

These parleys rarely had any but one ending; John considered it his duty to receive visitors. "Of course I'll see Miss Zalokostas."

Sally grunted, and shut the door.

Dora of Dinwiddie's. Celeste Litchfield's protégée.

St. John's rector had looked up Father Brethwald and sincerely sought a way around his trouble, but that inherently

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gentle old scholar stood firm against compromise. Since, Felton had encountered Celeste several times and found her still more disturbing in increased effort to put him at ease with her. Moreover, one couldn't help hearing things:

There was rumor of smouldering rebellion throughout St. Alban's parish. Credit had been refused on its summer coal-bill, for next winter's services, by Hiram Upp's coal-yard, in itself a prosperous establishment — but, John now quite clearly remembered, when Upp's ice-venture failed a month ago, Litchfield did indeed "go on" the proprietor's note. Then the whisper about a choir-boy, usual in such cases, and usually no more than *ben travato*, sounded. Tales increased concerning even Justine: they said she was too fond of bootleg liquor.

When a clergyman has opposed his most influential parishioner, there volunteer to her always more zealous and less scrupulous persons, *francs tireurs* allies waging guerrilla warfare beyond her control. Felton changed the figure: unlikely that Celeste was responsible for the worst of the downpour, but undeniable that she had pulled the plug.

Celeste's protégée — Dora of Dinwiddie's. . . .

"Come right in." He shook hands; pointed to that chair which Cameron had once occupied. "And sit down."

He had never before particularly noticed her, yet she puzzled him because there was today something different, something diffident, about her. Eyes large and liquid, hair soft and light, the Hellenic nose and mouth: these he recalled. Perhaps her clear Russian skin was paler than at his last casual glimpse of her. Or else it was because she drew a cape over a one-piece black dress — black when, he thus realized, almost every woman and girl in Doncaster was wearing colors. She had hesitated before the chair.

"Do sit down." His voice was kindly.

"Thanks." She seated herself with a little sigh.

"You're tired. May I ring for some tea?"

"Oh, no — no, thanks. Really, I'm not a bit tired."

"Still, it's hot. You live at the other end of town, don't you? That's quite a walk on a day like this."

"Not for me. Besides, I came in a car."

"The trolleys are stifling."

"I mean a motor. Mrs. Litchfield's. She sent hers 'round for me."

Felton looked away from Dora's luminous eyes. There it was: Celeste. He pretended, for his caller's sake, to search after something in a desk-drawer.

"Mrs. Litchfield? She sent you? Well" — it seemed that what he had found in that drawer was his dimpled smile — "what can I do for Mrs. Litchfield?"

"It's not for her; it's for me. It's all my own idea."

"Then tell me what I can do for you."

Dora knitted her fingers. "I — I —"

"Please."

At that it came in a rush. "I want to join your confirmation-class and be confirmed in your church."

He had been expecting something unusual, but this was beyond his calculations. The tenth candidate: the irreducible minimum! He caught his breath.

"In St. John's?"

She nodded. She did look hot, and she looked nervous. Somehow, her pallor was not just now the sort that lends a face spirituality.

Perhaps it was this which brought him to himself. He said:

"Aren't you — I understood you were a regular attendant at St. Alban's."

"I have been, but —"

"Weren't you a member of Dr. Dinwiddie's class?"

"Father Brethwald's? Yes, but there are some things about that church — "

"What things? "

Her helpless hands must hurt each other, they were so tightly interlocked. "Well, Father Felton — "

"Don't call me that! "

He spoke sharply — he scarcely knew why — and was immediately sorry. But he was annoyed by what Celeste had too clearly done: sent this girl here for nothing more than to strike a blow at poor Dinwiddie. If it had become professionally unethical to proselyte from one of the other Protestant sects, what would it not be to accept even a technically free offer of desertion from a struggling sister-parish that, however it called itself Catholic, was a duly constituted member of the Protestant Episcopal Church? He went on:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Zalokostas, but St. Alban's is as much a part of our communion as St. John's. The same bishop would confirm you whether you were received at one or the other, and you would be called upon to express a belief in the same truths."

But, though Dora's knuckles were reddening, she remained oddly obdurate. "From what I hear, St. Alban's believes in the same things St. John's does, all right, but in a lot more besides."

"What things? " repeated Felton, his own cheeks blushing because he felt that his sole defense, on this flank, would lie not in his knowledge, but in her ignorance.

"Things like calling Father Brethwald 'Father.' "

"That's just custom, Miss Zalokostas; it hasn't anything to do with faith."

"Well, then, he teaches us — Father Brethwald does — like I was taught when I was Orthodox — in the Liturgy — the Mass — "

"The communion-service."

"Yes, that there, somehow, the bread and wine get to be really the Body and Blood of —"

Felton gulped. His statement had been correct. Without ever greatly concerning himself, he had none the less been always aware, of course, of how, in practice, his denomination offered hospitality to antagonistic opinions upon the eucharist. Once he felt the concession made to the so-called Catholic bloc of Episcopalianism a proof of the sect's Christian tolerance; then he considered the charity too liberal, and lastly concluded that the question was one of minor importance. Now, however, he rejoiced in a situation that saved his immediate argument.

"You are at liberty," he hurriedly interrupted, "to believe that as much in St. John's as in St. Alban's."

He might be uncertain as to how much of what she had said was part and parcel of something she had been taught to say, yet what she next said was her own. He could not doubt the astonishment of her face, the spontaneity of her cry:

"But do you believe it?"

He rose. Without rudeness, although brusquely, he turned his broad back upon her and looked out of the window, across the graves, to the church shimmering in the heat.

What could he say to this mere girl about the theory of Orders and the doctrine of Intention? What, at bottom, did he really recall vividly enough to explain to her in terms that she would understand? Did she mean that transubstantiation didn't occur unless the officiating priest, validly ordained, had faith and purpose? This was Romanism, and John seemed to have heard of its rejection by the Orthodox, who, anyhow, declared that the word "transubstantiation" was not to be taken as defining the manner of the mystic change. The point was that, so far as he could recollect, it

had simply never occurred to Felton to regard the communion-service as anything except a memorial.

" Do you believe it? "

She was still talking, excitedly, as if the topic were essential! There had been a time, not long since, when he could look at ritualism as harmlessly amusing; now it appeared that the Dinwiddies could make difficulties in his own affairs. Celeste — He wouldn't have this alien interference with his parish: he was still rector of St. John's!

" — because, if you do — if you're a priest — if you're going to be my priest — I ought to tell you — " Dora pressed a crumpled handkerchief to her lips.

He sought the sort of words that use to be his loved and obedient slaves: he didn't find them. He couldn't placate Mrs. Litchfield; he had, after all, to be brief with her protégée.

" I don't believe it," he said. " And it wouldn't matter if I did — "

" Not matter? " suddenly she was aghast. That he should espouse one view or the other: either of these courses would be intelligible, her wide gaze told him. But that he should think the issue indifferent — " Not matter? "

" No, because, even if I did, your place is in St. Alban's."

§ 2

When, however, she went, she took Felton's momentary annoyance with her. He began by thinking things over; he ended by wondering if he had been wise.

Pride: his pride had tricked him.

To be sure, he couldn't rob Dinwiddie's nursery. But hadn't Dora already definitely deserted that? Confirmed of

course she ought to be; but if she couldn't have the ceremony in St. John's, she wasn't likely to have it in St. Alban's — not if Celeste had any influence upon her!

Was he doing his duty, then, to Dora by sending her away?

Was he doing his duty to his parish by courting the enmity of Celeste, a power in the diocese?

Was he doing his duty to himself by letting a mere detail of professional etiquette hold his confirmation-class just below Meeker's irreducible minimum?

Celeste wanted to injure Dinwiddie by weakening St. Alban's: Felton mustn't help her. But this part of the harm was done: he was quite sure now that Celeste wouldn't let Dora be confirmed in Dinwiddie's church. Quite. Why hadn't he seen that truth sooner?

The difficulties that the girl herself had raised, first unconsciously and then with a disturbing awe: there must be a way around them. He looked up the Articles of Religion, for the first time since his unpleasant talk with Cameron. Not that, probably, they were final; but still —

Yes, he had been entirely correct in what he said to Dora. The Article regarding Communion could really be taken any way you wanted to take it:

"The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign . . . but rather it is a Sacrament . . . insomuch that to such as . . . with faith receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup — "

And yet:

"Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine . . . is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament — "

All very well to add those words about "the Body of Christ" being "taken and eaten only after an heavenly and

spiritual manner." They left wide open the question of the Real Presence.

Dora Zalokostas answered it in the affirmative. Well, there was something or other, somewhere here, to show her that it didn't matter if the officiating clergyman answered it in the negative. Somewhere — Article XXVI:

"Neither is . . . the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith . . . do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

Even downright evil — for the sake of argument. The validity of Episcopalian Orders, whatever its value in his eyes, she had accepted under Dinwiddie.

Why did they keep on printing these things in the Prayer-Book, anyhow?

Then he came across something else that he had forgotten. The catechism said Baptism and the Supper of the Lord were the only sacraments "generally necessary to salvation," but here was a far more specific declaration in the Articles: confirmation was included among those "five commonly called Sacraments . . . not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism, and the Lord's Supper." Strictly speaking, confirmation wasn't a sacrament at all!

His Bishop: ought he to write his Bishop? But no: Meeker was the insistent author of the theory of an irreducible minimum!

It was a nuisance to have to bother with such non-essentials. Still, here was his answer to every quibble about them, as plain as this sunlight on those graves among which he and Alice had first come near to each other.

Alice: he decided to telephone her. More and more, lately, he had indulged the habit of seeking her opinion. Her good opinion he was resolved to keep.

§ 3

The 'phone stood on his desk. Through its receiver her clear mezzo-soprano came confidently:

"Celeste's back of it, of course."

He assented slowly. He hadn't mentioned that suspicion.

"Well — perhaps. Yes."

"There's no doubt about it, and it's horrid of her."

"She may not recognize her own impulses. I don't like to impugn motives."

"You don't have to, here. She carries hers like a flag — and you always carry your charity too far."

Felton flushed. "But what do you think I ought to do?"

"It's sweet of you to ask." How lightly her happy laughter ran along the wire! "I know what you will do."

"Let me hear your guess."

"Nothing, until you've seen poor Dr. Dinwiddie."

"Yes." John spoke slowly again: that would scarcely be a delectable interview. "To be sure, I must see him."

"And make really certain that if you refused the Greek girl she wouldn't let herself be confirmed in St. Alban's."

"I do feel certain, but, naturally, I'll make certain." Naturally, he reflected, he must.

"Then haven't I guessed right?"

"A hundred percent. perfect."

"Now," said Alice, "I'll tell you what you are going to do after that."

"Which is?" asked Felton, not without misgiving.

"Which is come and see me and let me know how it turned out. I'll be here all the rest of the day."

She hung up — in their frequent telephone-talks, it was ever Alice who hung up — and John sighed.

§ 4

He wished he didn't have to see Dinwiddie. Alice was right, but he wished she were wrong. Felton rose. He circled his desk and reached the study's door. When he touched the knob, he hesitated. Yet Alice was right! He rang for Sally:

" If anybody calls, I shall be at St. Alban's rectory."

" Want me to get the taxi? " demanded Miss Knrahnopfer, who smelled of the kitchen.

" No, thanks. I'll walk."

The sleeves were rolled well up on Sally's freckled arms. She set those arms akimbo.

" Don't tell me you're goin' to walk, Mr. Felton — not in this here sun."

" It's good of you to be so careful of me, Sally; but I believe a walk would freshen me a little."

" Well, it wouldn't. You haven't been lookin' so good for more'n a week. And do you know what the backyard thermometer says? It says over ninety-two. If you've got to see Dinwiddie, why'n't you 'phone? "

John turned again toward the window. Out of a turquoise sky molten sunlight poured. It fell from the dancing church-roof, blazed upon the stained-glass; the walls seemed to vibrate. In the graveyard the dry herbage looked ready to burst into flame.

" You could poach an egg on them tombstones," said Sally.

When he had looked out before, Felton hadn't half appreciated how hot it was; his mention of the heat to Dora had largely expressed only conventional concern for her. But it

was hot. Ninety-two: thought of the figures made it hotter. And he was tired.

"I'll take your advice, Sally."

§ 5

Yet he would not hesitate longer. Sally was scarcely gone before he had the telephone and Dinwiddie:

". . . of course I told her that I would not agree; that she was a member of your class and must go to you to be presented."

John could almost see the Newmanesque face as he heard the ascetic's question:

"And that, if she refused confirmation on all terms save her own, she must be denied it, as exhibiting a spirit unworthy of the gift?"

"I — To tell the truth, I hadn't thought of that." Felton's heart fluttered despairingly. "Now that you mention it, however — "

"Of course," the oblivious scholar pursued, "she doesn't have to be presented: she cannot be. All that I had her in my class for was to discover whether I could properly, so to say, certify her. We do not re-confirm the Orthodox, you know. Orthodox orders are valid, as even Rome admits, and this young woman was brought up in the Orthodox Church."

"Oh!" The fact might lead anywhere or nowhere. "But was she confirmed there?"

"Yes: chrysmated. Except to converts previously baptized, the Orthodox, who don't rebaptize such converts, usually administer chrysmation immediately after baptism. They argue that if there is a special grace for infant baptism, there must be one for — "

"Then she wouldn't count — the Bishop wouldn't count her to your credit? I mean he wouldn't consider her — "

"He would, if I did. Unfortunately, I have, although she does not yet know it, just decided not to."

Now John's heart leaped. "Not present her?"

"Not recommend her for reception as a member of —"

Felton, his eyes raised toward heaven, scarcely heard the conclusion: here was the "way around" his difficulty. Dora was free.

"Yes — yes?" John urged.

How like Dinwiddie to postpone until last the point of practical importance! . . . Free — unless there existed vital objections to her entrance by way of any parish.

That academic telephone was saying:

". . . reading. So I have lately felt scruples — common to many of our bishops, even if Bishop Meeker doesn't share them — against weening away the Orthodox, whose faith is, after all, our own, in whatever respect certain of their practices differ from —"

"Is that all?"

Relief had conquered tact. Involuntarily, John emphasized the demonstrative pronoun.

Its effect was instantly evident. Father Brethwald became chilly:

"The reason is quite sufficient for me."

"I don't see it," said Felton. He spoke with complete truth, but sudden sharpness. Was the way around, thus happily revealed, to be obscured again, and by a mere technicality? Dinwiddie had surrendered his claim: why shouldn't a brother cleric, honestly differing upon a minor detail, take it up? John saw no reason why he should not seize the full advantage offered by his own position.

He got it. Father Brethwald's mildness, as Felton well knew, always stopped short of his theological opinions, the fresh as well as the long-established. The chill grew icy:

"In that case," the rector of St. Alban's retorted, "you

had better send for Miss Zalokostas and reverse the decision that you made to her."

The telephone clicked upon silence.

§ 6

Well, that was that!

Among the least conscious endeavors of Felton's life, and therefore among his strongest, ranked the endeavor not to make enemies — even not to give hurt. Herein at least he had followed his Bishop's advice. The rector of St. John's didn't want to wound anybody; he quickly regretted his impulsive wounding of St. Alban's rector: " A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city." Not that Dinwiddie could prove effective as an enemy; not that he would be an enemy, nor yet that Felton need attempt any rewinning: only he was sorry for Father Brethwald.

Sorry; but there were limits. These meek men were always ready to take umbrage, and always, at bottom, dictatorial. Celeste Litchfield's bed in St. Alban's parish, royal couch though that place of repose might have appeared, must frequently have seemed to her far from a bed of roses.

For John really didn't see. The church of these Greeks and Russians and so on had no representative in the Doncaster Ministerial Association; proselyting from them was not like kidnapping, for instance, one of Katz's Lutherans. Besides, Dinwiddie himself had said the faith of Orthodoxy was that of Episcopalianism.

Felton was glad. He had discovered the way around, and he would take it. Somehow, the solution of the confirmation-class difficulty shed over his other difficulties a less unnatural glare than had latterly bathed them. He began to feel that this ending of one of his troubles presaged the ter-

mination of all its fellows — was a token that he deserved their termination.

The heat didn't matter now; Sally's protests wouldn't. He went into the hall — got his straw hat — got out. He was going, triumphant, to Alice.

"There's a way around most troubles," he thought — "if you can only find it."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

§ 1

As Felton turned into the grounds about Judge Averell's house, young Tom issued from among their ready made statues, and Justine Dinwiddie was with him. The yellow locks of her uncovered head fell across her face, but she showed no concern for a slightly rumpled appearance as she waved to the rector, her rebellious mouth laughing salutation.

"Hello!"

Thereat, the newcomer guessed, her flanneled companion caught cue; he grinned through his freckles and, without abandonment of a protective air that he was employing toward Justine, called to John:

"Hello, parson! You'll find Alice out back, and nobody else home."

Felton reddened, murmured embarrassed thanks, circled the house. He walked rapidly under the trees whose wide branches gave grateful shade to the rear lawn. Here the foliage served to shut him out from both the view of passersby and the arrows of Tom's intelligence; here, too, was Alice half raising from a hammock to greet her guest.

§ 2

It was always a miracle to see her; however much her presence had been expected, it unfailingly occurred as if in obedience to some command of his good fairy's wand. The

dark centres of her gray-blue eyes were alight; her thin dress showed the splendid lines of her athletic figure; she offered her two hands, palms down:

"Don't take that camp-stool; it's an instrument of torture." She swung her long legs to the green turf. "Here you are."

He sat beside her. The hammock swayed gently. "Isn't it hot?"

"I haven't noticed." The direct Alice pursued: "Did you see Dr. Dinwiddie?"

"I've just finished talking to him," said John uncomfortably.

"Well?"

"He doesn't want Dora — Miss Zalokostas — in his class. He'd made up his mind to that before I spoke to him and without any reference to her call on me."

"Why?"

"Because —" Felton had carefully rehearsed Dinwiddie's reasons, on the journey up-town, but their prepared statement faded. "Oh, it's one of his fine theological distinctions!"

"Too deep for me?" Alice asked while the pink pleasantly reddened in the oval of her pink-and-olive cheeks.

"Too deep for me."

"I don't believe that, and I think you'd better try me a little before deciding upon my moronism."

Felton's right hand had been occupied with his brown hair. The hand descended, and with his handkerchief he dabbed at the perspiration on his brow.

"It seems he has a prejudice against proselyting from among the Orthodox. That's what the Greeks and Russians call their church. And this girl was brought up in it."

"A prejudice? If we're right and they're wrong, it's a duty, isn't it?"

"It would be, I dare say, if they were. But — well, the fact is, Dinwiddie thinks they aren't."

"And that we are? How can he?"

"No: that both are. He thinks they're practically the same as us — but of course with a Catholic ritual."

"Then I should think we'd come together."

She had given him a new argument for his support:

"That's what I say," he heartily acquiesced. "I told you it was just an example of Dinwiddie's hair-splitting. He loves that sort of thing."

"But what does the Church say?"

"Bishop Meeker doesn't agree with him."

"Then you're all right?"

The happiness of her tone put to flight his hesitancy. Not his least charm lay in that frank satisfaction with which he seized everywhere and from everybody whatever they possessed for his passing need. His smile summoned its still boyish dimples. "Absolutely."

"That's wonderful!" Her large, fine hands applauded. "Of course, it's a pity for Dr. Dinwiddie, and of course it was mean of Celeste to do what she did; but since that didn't count, and since the fault's all the Doctor's, I'm glad."

"I'm glad you are. It brings my class up to the Bishop's order — only just up to it, but there, all right." John generally felt very young when with Alice, and mostly spoke then as a younger man than he was. "Dinwiddie says we can't actually reconfirm an Orthodox, but the Bishop will have to charge up Dora to my credit."

"And to the debit of St. Alban's. I am sorry about that. It will leave their class with only two members. Justine was here a little while ago, and she said then that there were only three." Alice was grave again; her glance had the quality of a brooding dream.

You can't sit in a hammock beside anybody without sitting quite close. "Yes." Felton was no scandal-bearer, but he did want to shift the subject of talk. "When I came in, I passed her and Tom going out."

"I guess he was watching for her to be finished with me. I think he likes her a lot."

"Do you think he's in —" John looked straight at his interlocutor, and stressed the phrase that was beginning to mean so much to him — "in love?"

"I hope so — I believe it — and I'm glad for that, too."

"There's some talk about Justine." So much the rector had to say.

"I know, but people always talked about her, and I've always believed in her. Tom's been ever so much better lately — ever so much steadier. I can see there's something on his mind, and I think it's Justine. They've been friends ever since they were kids together. Father and mother will balk at it for a while. Father'll fight like a marine against it. He takes in every one of the stories about her. He won't let her inside the house; she only came today because he was at his office, and mother was out. Oh, he'll do anything to stop a match there. Still, I hope Tom marries her."

Quickly, Felton hoped so, too. Whenever Alice was beside him, everything was as it should be. No wonder she hadn't noticed that this was a hot afternoon: he noticed now that, here in the sequestered shade, it was cool — cool and comforting. "The right kind of love can do everything for a man."

"And for a woman."

Their combined weight in the hammock had brought their bodies into a contact, but it translated itself from him to ethereal terms. He wanted to touch the blue-black hair drawn away from her calm brow and over her ears. There was nobody near. He wanted to fall down before her. And

yet something — it remained persistently a veiled something — firmly restrained him.

"For any woman?"

"I mean it would steady Justine, too: that's all she needs. It used to be a friend she needed — some older girl — to stand up for her; and I did that, before I went south. But when a girl gets older, she needs more than a friend."

John wrestled with his inhibition. "You're right — and a man, too."

He had heard, once, of the aural theory and thought it silly; now he thought that he could almost see the glow of her aura surrounding her — wanted to say that to come thus to her was like drawing aside a curtain and seeing a sunrise. The sunrise cleansed; the aura infallibly comforted. He had read something like that somewhere, sometime, and, a few years since, words had been so easy for him, even if they were never words of love. Here, though, this afternoon, when he so wanted to place upon her knees, for her blessing, the thoughts that crowded his heart until it ached; here, this afternoon —

The light filtered through the trees and made the pattern of maple-leaves across her white dress. Her gaze met him fairly, and he saw that she had come suddenly, for all his stumbling, to the door of comprehension: it was not yet open, but she stood before it.

She said, very softly: "For everybody."

He was shaken by an anger at his futility. "Oh, they talk about speech being the thing that makes us different from the brutes! Why, it always throws us down — it always runs away — when we need it most! It only leaves us the words that we can't use. And if I could catch mine, it wouldn't be enough for what I want to express to you. But — but —" He took her unresisting hands. "But, Alice, you've always understood —"

"Al-*ice!*" The Judge had come home from his office; he was calling to her from the back-porch. John could see the white hair and the red tie. "Where did you put those syphons?"

She leaped out of the hammock. Felton followed. Judge Averell saw him.

"So you are there, too, Felton? Here — don't run away! You must come up and have a little liquid refreshment."

John had not quite said what he wanted to say, but, he reflected, he said much, and her hands did not withdraw themselves. As surely as if they had been laid upon his brown head, he felt the benediction of them. Alice, he had been about to say, ever understood him, even in his silences: under the Judge's steady regard, Felton came up for his whisky-and-soda, feeling cleared of all trouble — feeling right with the world — feeling, he told himself, much of what must be the exultation of a Catholic penitent when a priest has absolved him.

§ 3

He was in this high mood when he walked down Henrietta Street toward St. John's and the setting sun. At the second corner a limousine pulled up, and somebody leaned from its nearer window.

She wore one of those little hats which come so far down over eyes and nose as effectively to mask their wearers; but he knew her. He knew the car; he knew the magenta nails and the rings of the fingers that beckoned: he knew the saffron face and red mouth: Celeste Litchfield.

"I was just going," she said, "to your rectory."

Her tone was a metallic challenge. Felton met it with his smile, his hat in one hand, the other hand extended. She,

however, though she continued to bend over the sill, withdrew her palm before his could take it.

"That's kind of you," he said: "to call. May I ride there with you?"

"I'm not sure you'll think it kind," Celeste warned him. "And we may as well have our talk here."

Standing below her and looking upward, he was in a disadvantageous position, as he felt she manœuvred that he should be. Still, he could at least see her strangely winning, half savage face. The straight, jet hair, cut like a boy's, scarcely showed at either side of the rosy hat; the dark brows almost met above her high cheek-bones; her black eyes shone brilliantly hard. John didn't care: he had tidings certain to soften her — and he all but had Alice.

"As you wish, Mrs. Litchfield. My study would be quieter."

"I'm not looking for quiet. What's all this about Dora Zalokostas?"

He considered the chauffeur: a safe statue of deafness. "She's been to see you?"

"What's all this about your refusing to have her in your confirmation-class?"

"Nothing. She —"

"What do you mean — 'nothing'?"

"Why, nothing. I couldn't take her, of course, while she belonged to your rector —"

"She don't. She's a free agent. And why couldn't you, anyhow?"

"Never mind. I was going to say: after she left my place, I got in touch with Dinwiddie, and he agreed to relinquish his claim. I mean" — John exercised some effort; he seized truth by both shoulders and turned it face forward — "Dinwiddie had decided not to have her —"

"I'd like to know his reasons!"

"It seems Dr. Dinwiddie thinks we Episcopalians ought not to take converts from the Orthodox because — "

"Oh, if it's that sort of thing, don't bother to tell me! Get to the point."

"The point is: he had decided, so I am free to accept her."

It was evident that Celeste would have preferred to triumph over the rector of St. Alban's by *force majeure;* yet she showed willingness to take her gain for the sake of its future uses. Her eyes softened, and the strong white teeth showed between her parted lips.

"So you'll have Dora? "

"Yes."

"Good! " Celeste put her face closer to his. "Then I've got some more good news for you: the other two girls in his class — it was all girls — want to get out of it and join yours."

John's smile vanished. "Were they Orthodox, too? "

"No. They were both brought up in St. Alban's."

He caught his breath; he fingered his collar. "Then I can't take them."

Storm swept again up Celeste's saffron cheeks and into her gaze. "Why not? "

"You've said it, Mrs. Litchfield: because they belong to St. Alban's."

"What I said was, they're leaving there. They've got a right to leave, haven't they? "

"Under the circumstances — "

"Don't you bother about the circumstances, Mr. Felton; I'll take care of them."

He thought of Alice. As there were limits to his sorrow for Dinwiddie, so were there limits to John's interference in Dinwiddie's affairs. Felton said to himself that he had never seriously considered the reception of any of St. Alban's flock. When something urged Celeste's argument that the

last two class-members were anyhow leaving it, the thought of Alice broke through such paralogy, and left him fronting the thus bared fact of Mrs. Litchfield's conspiracy. The chauffeur's back continued that of a man who hears nothing.

" Under the circumstances, I won't accept those girls."

Celeste launched at him: " You're taking Dora."

" I tried to explain. She's Orthodox, a member of the — "

" And now you're quibbling. Half of you clergymen don't believe in anything, and the other half don't believe in anything but words."

John felt the blood in his head. He drew back. Yet the exultant mood still sustained him. " I had better say ' Good afternoon ' and not hold you up any longer."

" You had better be sensible." She leaned out farther, her face a threat. " That's what you'd better be, Mr. Felton." — What would this stolid driver think? John half turned; then she began to master her anger. — " Wait a minute. Listen to reason. Whatever you think about it, these girls are going to get out of St. Alban's. If they're not confirmed in St. John's, they'll go up to Americus and be confirmed there."

" That will be Dawson's affair, not mine." — Dawson was rector of the Episcopal Church in Americus. — " I'm sure you'll find he looks at this matter exactly as I do, but anyhow — "

" Not much. I've got influence all over this diocese, and you know it — even if I do seem to have lost what I had in the churches of my own home town. Listen. Supposing I hadn't any, would you want the girls to turn Catholic, or Methodist, or something? Or would you want them to be atheists like Ernest Grigg? "

John had lately met that question in the case of Dora, and he considered it answered. He remembered and paraphrased Dinwiddie's words:

"If they refuse confirmation in St. Alban's, they show they're not worthy of confirmation anywhere."

Celeste's solid palm smacked the window-sill. "Mr. Felton, for the last time: yes or no?"

She did have influence; but he would have Alice. Celeste Litchfield possessed something more than a driving force — something more than a strong will and an utter belief in it — she possessed magnetism; Felton, however, still held the clean radiance in which he left Alice.

"No," said he, and looked straight in the dusky face of his new enemy.

Celeste returned his gaze, and, as she did so, an odd thing happened. He did not understand how his moment of firmness lent strength to his own comely face and heightened its attractiveness, he did not realize the instinctive throwing-back of his broad shoulders, the raising of his chin; but he saw a change come over her. The red of anger left her cheeks, and another sort of flush flooded their swarthy surface; she smiled, and the smile contained no drop of bitterness.

Suddenly she nodded: she could be almost beautiful.

"I believe I like you," she said, rather as if to herself. "I like you too much to talk about that note you gave Courtie, anyhow."

So she knew about the "confidential transaction!" Well —

But she was further elucidating her new position:

"You've got nerve. You're the only man I know who's not afraid to stand up to me — except Father Brethwald: Courtie always just about expires if I look him in the eye; and Father Brethwald doesn't count, because he's not a real man. It's a pity you and I can't work together in this diocese: you'd go far, and we'd get things done."

John's cheeks flushed, too. But he shook his head.

"Still," she concluded, "if we can't, I'm not going to fight you about those girls, Mr. Felton. Only I am going to make you see some things the way I do, before I'm through with this."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

§1

BISHOP MEEKER, on the morning of the Transfiguration Feast, arrived at Doncaster barely one hour before that set for service in St. John's: confirmation of St. Alban's candidates — Celeste had evidently so far relented that two of them had returned there — was to occur during even-song. The Litchfield's newest limousine waited his train and bore him immediately to Felton's house.

The Bishop had aged. Still a large man, he did not fill his most recent frock-coat and gaiters quite completely. His mutton-chop whiskers were gone white, his wide mouth was tighter, and the purple veins were increased on his face. John had been right about this prelate: always an easy man up to an invisible point and beyond that inflexible, he had lately moved the point considerably closer. He showed it.

"I am very glad to see you, sir," said Felton.

He wasn't. Notwithstanding certain penultimate prognostications, all things had not moved smoothly toward this occasion.

Alice was away from town: she went shortly after their significant interview on the Averell back-lawn, before he could see her again — it was a long-planned visit to some school-friend or other at some summer place in the mountains — and of course she had no sooner gone than trouble recommenced. Internecine conflict broke forth in the Ladies' Guild; it still raged. Jaundiced Damos growled in St. Martha's: he couldn't stop it. To last night's choir-practice

he had been hurriedly summoned because theosophical and indispensable Mrs. Erdman demanded, with flashing eyes, an anthem that gave her contralto voice the best solo, whereas, if Mrs. Erdman got it, the Christian Scientist soprano, Irma Olin, sweetly said, she would walk right out of church — and there wasn't, as she well knew, another good woman soprano to be had in town: John barely patched up a very temporary peace by asserting the Episcopal rector's right in such matters and arranging for two anthems. By way of climax, one of the boy-members of the minimum-size confirmation-class deserted at almost its zero hour, deciding in favor of " Bethesda Baptist " on the undeniable plea that the innovating pastor of that conventicle had affixed a radio machine to his pulpit; the only possible replacement proved to be Valeria Neff, a spinster who had notoriously belonged to nearly every sect and who, having lately been robbed by a New York swanee's correspondence school, evinced some last-minute willingness to begin all over again at Episcopalianism, whence she had escaped in distant youth without its imposition of hands. Long ago, Valeria gave up birthdays and had religions instead: John called it providential — but he wished he had some familiar, like the Litchfields — some hustler like Celeste — in his congregation, to supplement Alice's steady labors.

" We will go into your study," said the Bishop.

" The service," said Felton, " starts at — "

" Let us go into your study."

They went. What happened there might have seemed, to most, a little thing, a formal and more or less usual proceeding; but it added to Felton's depression. It was only that Bishop Meeker asked John for certain parish-statistics and sat silent while they were drawn up for him from the ready, neatly classified data.

Before that memoranda had been completed, the church-

bell began to ring. The Bishop did not look at the papers; he folded them evenly and placed them, with vast deliberation, in the inside breast pocket of his episcopal coat.

"There are how many in the class?" he inquired.

Here was safe ground. "Ten," said Felton.

Bishop Meeker said "Um." The letter of his commands had been met; he could not well remonstrate, although he plainly wanted to.

"That is —" began John.

The Bishop almost brightened. "That is what?" He was sitting across the desk from John and began to finger the pectoral Cross which always hung nearer his stomach than his breast: when he caressed that Cross he was sure to be about to assert his ecclesiastical position. "It has to be either ten or not ten."

"Well, Bishop, this is rather an exceptional instance," smiled John. He smiled nervously, however, and nervously started an explanation of the matter of Dora Zalokostas. To his relief, the Bishop interrupted with a suppressing gesture of that forefinger on which shone the amethyst ring:

"I understand. As you probably know, I have lately been named as a member of the Church's Commission for a closer *rapprochement* with the Orthodox Church and the so-called Old Catholics."

Felton had only once or twice heard of the very existence of such a commission; long ago, he forgot it. A closer *rapprochement?* His spirit further declined. Of course, in that case, the Episcopalians wouldn't take an Orthodox away from her own faith. "Then you won't —"

"On the contrary. Many of my fellow commission-members might object: it seems to me that some of them are entirely too eager to kow-tow to these other authentic branches of the Church Catholic: it sometimes amounts to

a half-expressed doubt of our own orders. For my part, the personality of some of the Bishops from those branches is, to say the least, unimpressive: they are contentious and absurdly superior.

" Oh," sighed John, comforted, " I was afraid perhaps that our own Bishops — "

" I am yours," said Bishop Meeker. Except that his prejudice against the representatives of " those branches " was stronger than his present feelings, he would almost have wished to decide Dora's case otherwise than he had decided it. He thought that nobody could deceive him, but he half suspected Felton of somehow wanting to. So it did not " have to be ten or not ten " ! The Bishop owned no unnatural fondness for being confuted. " I am your Bishop: *ecclesia est in episcopo.* Of course, I will not reconfirm; but if this young woman comes of her own will — "

" I am assured of that," said John hastily.

The church-bell had stopped ringing. Bishop Meeker rose.

" Very well then." He tapped his breast-pocket. " As I wrote you, I lunch and dine, early, at the Litchfields'; I go to St. Alban's at Evening Prayer; but between my meals, I shall have an opportunity of examining these papers, and I shall talk to you about them after I leave Dinwiddie and before I take the night-train. I hope you will be so good as to wait in for me."

§ 2

According to his plans — he rarely broke his plans — the Bishop did indeed eat his feast-day luncheon at the Litchfields'; and he lunched long. He produced no more humorous stories — he was moving from anecdotage toward dotage — but he ate well. At St. John's all had passed with outward dignity and calm; only, in the afternoon when Celeste

and her husband left him alone in their library, those memoranda spoiled his nap, and, if he was somewhat consoled by the following motor-ride into the country, the digestion of his excellent dinner was impaired by news that he received over the Litchfield coffee. A sound Low-Churchman of the old-school, Bishop Meeker stood in equal horror of catholicism and modernism: they were homonymous enemies of his episcopacy.

He came late to evensong at St. Alban's, though to be sure the service waited. There was something almost pettish about the manner in which his episcopal touch was bestowed upon the pair of young ladies whom Father Brethwald presented; there was much positively ominous about the manner in which Bishop Meeker accompanied Dr. Dinwiddie to the latter's home.

"No, thank you, Doctor." While his host offered to sweep books from its most comfortable chair, his self-invited guest surveyed the cluttered study, his left fist firmly retaining his silk hat, wide-brimmed and rosetted, his weight shifting from foot to foot. "No, I won't sit down. I can say better what I have to say, standing."

"Yes?" said St. Alban's rector. More than ever, he resembled the Newman of Post-Tractarian days.

"I am informed," the Bishop's heavy voice continued, "that you not long ago made a brief visit to Pittsburgh."

"Yes?" repeated Father Brethwald gently.

"Dr. Dinwiddie, do you know, in Pittsburgh, Bishop Wagenaar, of the so-called Old Catholic Church?"

Father Brethwald was standing with his arms full of books. "So-called? Those Roman Catholics who refused the dogma of papal infallibility, at its promulgation by the Vatican Council, themselves assumed the designation of *Altkatholiken*."

"Don't dodge —" began Bishop Meeker. "I refrain, at

present, from reference to what has obviously happened in your parish. I refrain from reference to the size of the shockingly small class you presented. But as to what I do say, don't dodge."

The ritualist smilingly indicated his load of theological volumes. "I can't: these are too heavy."

"I say don't dodge the issue. Do you know this Bishop Wagenaar?"

"Yes. He tells me that he has met you as a new member of our own Church's commission for more amicable relations with his communion and the Orthodox."

"We are not concerned with amicable relations here and now." Down went the corners of the speaker's wide mouth. "The regrettable fact has come to my knowledge that there are certain Episcopal clergymen who, actually doubting the validity of our own orders, have been secretly securing re-ordination from these Old Catholics."

"Because nobody doubts the Old Catholics' claim to a share in the Apostolic Succession." — Most High-Churchmen are irked of having to defend their own Bishops as apostolic while condemning the views of many of them as heretical.

"Nobody should doubt ours. Please don't interrupt, Doctor. This thing has been happening in other dioceses, and it has been winked at. I do not propose" — Dr. Meeker drew himself to his full height — "I do not propose to wink at it in mine."

Father Brethwald stooped to replace his burden on the chair, so that his face was momentarily hidden. His retarded reply was a whispered monosyllable:

"No?"

"Certainly not."

The Bishop paused for a further response. None just then came: Father Brethwald's shaking fingers busied them-

selves unnecessarily with the books. His ecclesiastical superior was forced to the issue:

"Now I have received information that you have sought and obtained one of these reordinations at the hands of this Bishop Wagenaar. Is that correct?"

Father Brethwald looked up at last. His thin face was very pale. "I am entitled to know the source of your information."

"Eh?" Bishop Meeker hadn't counted upon this, and he did not like it. "If you or any other Episcopal clergyman thinks that his orders are invalid —"

"Rome thinks —"

"What have we to do with her? That was settled long ago." The Bishop wanted no controversy, but he was well willing to divert from his informant's identity. Besides, if a man whom he ordained were no priest, then Bishop Meeker was no bishop. "Who believes the old Nag's Head fable now? Over and over again, it has been proved a malicious Jesuit lie!"

"Doubtless," said Father Brethwald, himself always eager for controversy, and at present anxious to defend a position vital to both his faith and his living. "We all know that Christopher Holywood's slander was put forth nearly fifty years after the ceremony it slandered; but we all also know that our orders do stand or fall upon Archbishop Parker's consecration at Lambeth. These Episcopalian clergymen who do what you condemn: they remember that the Edwardine Ordinal was used for Parker, whereas it had been repealed in the previous reign; the theory of the plentitude of royal supremacy was all that made it even legally valid. Then there is the matter of whether Parker's consecrators had been properly consecrated: I needn't remind you, sir, how —"

Dangerous ground. "The point is this," declared the

Bishop: " The Church in England broke from the Church at Rome in 1534, and yet it wasn't until 1570 that a pope excommunicated any Catholic who communicated at an Anglican altar: Pius V — wasn't it? — the seventh Pope after the break. Were all those sainted six guilty of a monstrous neglect of their English flock, or was the English Church legitimate and Pius V in error? "

" I'm aware of that difficulty, sir, and I have never seen it solved; but for practical purposes, and on other grounds, the Bull of Leo XIII did settle the debate for his own Church — "

" Not for ours. I repeat: nobody should doubt our orders — and least of all should a priest of our own faith. To get reordination — "

Father Brethwald shook that narrow head on which the sparse hair shone silver-gray. " Not reordination; the rite would of course be administered conditionally."

" And then," said the Bishop, with something like a sneer: he was certain that he was right, and he was beginning to feel annoyance at his inability to demonstrate his rightness — " and then the creature would sneak back to us and go on reading the Episcopal services, in an Episcopal Church as an Episcopal clergyman, when he did not believe — "

" He would believe the services — the ritual is not suspect — and he would be sure that he was a priest. If he were punished, it would be for having too much faith — not too little. Why is nothing done any more to those who have none? "

That query was mildly put, but the Bishop bristled. " What do you mean? "

" There are men who remain in the Episcopal ministry while denying the resurrection of the body and the Virgin birth. Our orders may be insecure, but I am sure, sir, you

will agree with me in our Church's entire committal to the creed voicing those fundamental doctrines."

"Name one such man — in my diocese."

"Even in this diocese, there are some who are farther from the faith than denial: who don't understand those tenets, or don't consider that they matter, or don't think about them at all."

"I say: name one such man in my diocese."

"No, sir; because of my own knowledge I know none — "

"Exactly." No young fool had been preaching wildly here. A good thing, too: despite all his insistence on Episcopal power, Dr. Meeker admitted the truth of the English Bishop of Gloucester's statement that for definiteness of faith, in Anglicanism, "the appeal to authority has largely lost its power."

"But if you would make personal inquiries — "

To be advised to hunt more trouble — to be taught his Episcopal duty by a mealy-mouthed priest alleged to have secured reordination (yes, it was reordination!) from another sect: too much for Bishop Meeker. High time to come back, at any other cost, to the concrete! He jerked the conversation face-about:

"Detectives' work! The offense I am here to speak of is overt."

"You spoke of the conditional ordinations as secret, sir."

There are few things more provocative of wrath than to be tripped by a quotation from one's own utterances. The Bishop's throat swelled.

"I won't be led into any argument on orders. There can't be any. Don't interrupt me again. You know our Church's attitude on the episcopacy. St. Cyprian: *Ecclesia est in episcopo.*" The hierarch's right hand fingered that pectoral Cross of his; the amethyst ring glittered. "I am your Bishop. I've asked you a plain question, and now I demand

a plain answer: have you, or have you not, been reordained by one of the Old Catholics? "

Father Brethwald looked around his shabby study, as if to seek from one of the books he loved a more exact definition than his thin lips could, unaided, give. " I have not been reordained."

" Call it what you like! " Bishop Meeker's anger mounted higher still at the averted glance he mistook for a token of timidity. " Your jesuitical juggling won't save you. Have you received any laying-on of hands from anybody anywhere since your reception as a priest into the ministry of the Episcopal Church? "

The accused man raised his head. His thin lips tightened till they seemed altogether bloodless. For several seconds, he gazed silently into the enflamed, but unwinking, eyes opposite his own. Then, still in his quiet voice, he spoke:

" What you charge is no crime — "

" We'll see about that! Answer me."

" And I will not answer you."

" Eh? " Bishop Meeker's reaction was a backward reel. " You — refuse to answer? "

" Exactly."

" Eh? How's that? "

" I said ' Exactly.' "

" I am your Bishop — " But the Bishop's face bore the Cardinal's color.

" At the present time, in the present circumstances, and with my accuser unidentified, I do not acknowledge your right to put the question."

On the Bishop's face the purple veins darkened. He fought for self-control; the loss of it was always bad for his health. " That is final? "

" Quite."

" You — It is because you're ashamed — "

"Of nothing. Rather, I am ashamed only to see a man in your position lend himself as a weapon of base revenge to a woman whom I, by my right, refused Holy Communion to, when to grant it would have been contrary to my conscience and a bringing of scandal upon our Church."

The Bishop struggled this time between dignity and duty, and just managed to reconcile them:

"Your disrespect I overlook; your imputation of motive I deny." He was sincere with the intense sincerity of him who refuses to believe himself capable of being mistaken. "I even put aside your failure to notify your Ordinary of your action in repelling a would be communicant. But I do say this: If you refuse to answer me on the point I have raised, you must take the consequences. I will stay here only a moment more, and that only in order to warn you of two other things of which I came, most unwillingly, to warn you. In the first place, indirectly from the Americus and Monroe rectors, who visited your church not long ago, I have received complaint of popish practices at St. Alban's. In the second, and on your very subject of bringing scandal upon our Church, remember what a great Master of Baliol once said: 'No doubt created by sceptics is to be compared with the wide doubt created by those who say one thing and do another.' You are preaching — we are all preaching — the duties of parents to their children. Doctor, from sources of undoubted authenticity, I learn that your own daughter may be a cause of scandal, if not directly to the Church, at least to the Church through you who are — as yet — one of its ministers."

He flung upon his head the rosetted silk hat. Under shadow of this symbol of authority, he wheeled away.

The priest's spare figure shook. His mouth opened in a face gone waxen. His careful speech failed him:

"Bishop, you don't — You can't —" The shock of his

guest's last words had driven the scholar into the deepest recesses of his soul and hailed hence the father for the first time fearful for his only child, yet fierce to defend her. "You must — What — "

He essayed to bar the door, but the bigger man brushed easily past.

§ 3

Bishop Meeker had come to St. Alban's in that new Litchfield limousine, but dismissed it on arrival, having conscientiously told himself it would not be seemly for him to accept too many favors from one family at one Doncaster visit — and that family the town's richest. Now, however, he found an added annoyance in the fact of the car's absence: an outraged ecclesiastic, he could have made at least an impressive departure had he been able to make it in a dignified automobile. As it was, he set off at his best foot-pace, a speed dangerous to eupepticity and absolutely ruinous to a digestion already nervously impaired, yet none the less creditable, from the athlete's point of view, in a man of this Bishop's age and build.

Defied! — Worse: temporarily outmanœuvered! He'd see about this.

He knew the way to St. John's, but tramped it with increasing wrath. What was the Episcopal Church if not episcopal? What was it coming to? Was it any wonder that, everywhere, its pews were empty?

Empty pews — yes. For now here was this Felton. Dinwiddie's lack of support — explicable, even logical. If a man deliberately cultivated the severest scruples, where practically authorized practice permitted the contrary, what would any sane person expect? But Felton wasn't Dinwiddie's sort. The perilous truth was that his sort was becoming typical. Not only in the Church, either: in most

churches. The reverse of rigid. Not lazy. Good at every one of the functions of a minister that lay outside the four walls of his particular church-edifice: successful in each important activity save the most important. A case too common for comfort. What was the matter?

A hot night. Bright yellow stars hung low; the air was impregnated with gasoline; whenever the Bishop passed under a row of pavement-bordering trees, he noted that his breathing became really arduous. The streets were empty — except that there a pair of lovers courted at an alley-mouth — that now and again an automobile sped by, two people close together on its front seat, the rest of the car empty.

"I ought to have had Celeste Raymond's — Litchfield's — motor wait."

Very hot.

Bishop Meeker remembered Felton at ordination: a nice young fellow. And later: still that. A nice young fellow now. But all the while slowing down — loosening his grip. Somehow. Undeniable. Evident at last. What —

"Some men who remain in the . . . ministry . . . who are farther from the faith than denial . . . who don't consider. . . ."

Faugh! He wouldn't remember this which that sly jesuit had said. A bishop had his duties as to revealed evils, but he wasn't a heresy-hunter!

Practical affairs were bad enough. There was no necessary connection between them and the — the other thing. Dinwiddie he would surely deal with. Meanwhile, there were too many Feltons in this diocese — in every diocese — every protestant sect. Whatever the cause, its remedy remained the property of the strong hand.

Hot. One of those breathless nights of these regions when the humidity rivals that of a July afternoon. By the time

Bishop Meeker rang the doorbell at his destination, he felt as if he had been walking, clothed, through the waters of a tepid shower bath. His thick lips worked: he knew he wasn't looking his impressive best. . . . Defied!

"Good evening, Bishop," said Sally Knrahnopfer. "Come right on in. He's waitin'."

"I told him to," the Rt. Rev. Wilfred Augustus retorted. His tone implied: "He'd better be!"

A green shaded electric lamp sufficed his flat-topped desk; John turned a current into the ceiling's centre bulb-cluster the better to welcome Bishop Meeker. The priest's round face showed anxiety, but the Bishop's looked like a drowned man's: the veins stood out in high purple from the red cheeks; a drop of sweat had run down the long nose and hung from its end; the double collar was wilted.

"You're very hot," Felton said: "let me —".

"I'm not hot," said Bishop Meeker — "at least, not too hot." He hurriedly shifted his weight from one gaitered leg to the other; he began to mop his cheeks with a handkerchief already moist. "Put out that light, will you?" He pointed upwards. "I detest overhead lights."

John obeyed.

The Bishop sat down heavily. Heavily he breathed. Still, he came directly to the point. Tapping his breast pocket, he began:

"I've been over these."

Felton sat down, too. His legs bent tight around the seat of his desk-chair. "Oh."

"Those figures you gave me."

John once more sought his gift of words, and once more sought in vain. "Oh."

Bishop Meeker understood that here was a man in a mood decidedly unlike Dinwiddie's. Here was a slacker conscious of his crime. That pleased the Bishop: it offered a penny of

compensation to feelings lacerated at St. Alban's, and it fortified.

"They won't do," said he.

"In what way?" John asked.

"In any way. This parish is atrophying, Felton, and you should be as fully aware of it as I am."

The minister was aware of it, but he was equally aware of a conviction that the fault did not belong at his door, where it was obviously being deposited. A sense of injustice gave him his mental feet:

"We meet almost all our diocesan obligations."

Bishop Meeker shook his damp head. "Atrophying. It has been noticeable for a great while, but I have so far refrained from criticism in the long hope, and with the prayer, that the trouble might yet prove only passing. There is, however, such a thing as waiting too long: these figures prove that it is chronic."

"St. John's has nearly always met its assessments."

"Since you have been here, Felton, it has never more than met them. Foreign Missions — you scraped through; in Domestic Missions you hardly dragged yourself over the top; the winter's drive was a virtual failure here."

"But Bishop — "

The amethyst ring waved John to silence. The Bishop discoursed learnedly upon fairs, rummage-sales, amateur theatricals, strawberry-festivals, pageants, dances, chicken-suppers: every means of church money-raising with which his auditor was already familiar. "This static condition," he concluded, "cannot continue."

Felton thought of Alice. "Next year — "

"Exactly. I hope so. In fact, it must be different next year. Those are old stories, you would say: you will have to prove that they are not merely earlier chapters in an increasingly depressing chronicle. Well, I pass over the last

allotment; I pass over the weak response to my appeal for the clerical pension-fund, which should have had a personal interest to most clergymen, even the youngest. I have said nothing, and shall say nothing, about your merely precise compliance with my request regarding the size of today's confirmation-class. So I come to the data I asked for — out of season, I admit — this morning." The Bishop solemnly produced those accusatory papers. He affixed a horn-rimmed pince-nez to the bridge of his nose. "The Sunday School has not grown."

"It's about impossible to get teachers."

"Hum." — As usual! — "It shouldn't be — in a parish with vitality."

"I don't know any of our parishes where it isn't, and in town here the other churches are having the same experience."

"Well, I am not touching on the scarcity of teachers: I refer to the paucity of pupils. You must build up the pupils' number, Felton." Bishop Meeker looked at John over those glasses. "Must." He went on through the dismal list. At last he came to its concluding items. "In this matter of finances — there has been no increase during the last three years."

Money! It was always money. The people of St. John's paid their subscriptions to the church, outside the church; but so few came inside! John longed for a Celeste Litchfield in his congregation, as he had more than once recently come to long.

"Anyhow," said he, defensively, "we have the smallest debt in the diocese, when you take into account — "

"And yet, considering the value of its property, St. John's collections are a trifle — a mere trifle. Here is a congregation composed largely of business-men; as a congregation, they have a large sum of money invested; from that these

collections may be said to represent the income. If the investment were entirely his own, what one of these men would call this a fair return on it? "

" I don't suppose any of them would. But that's because the investment isn't entirely any one man's."

" I see your membership is as large as ever: why are your collections so low? "

Felton hesitated. " It's hard to explain — "

As if it really were! As if the Bishop hadn't heard the explanation time and time again! " Isn't it," he severely demanded, " because the attendance is not proportional to the membership? "

John ran a finger around his clerical collar. " Yes! " It was out now. Yet he added: " Only we are holding our own."

" Healthy parishes grow. How can you expect a responsive activity to church financial appeals from a membership that doesn't attend services? "

" Isn't the same everywhere? "

" Eh? " Was Felton, after all, going to be rebellious, too? *Ecclesia est in episcopo:* Bishop Meeker wouldn't stand rebellion twice of an evening, especially when the second revolt was upon a point so well taken. John had no right to a direct answer. And, anyhow, the Bishop had finally contrived to secure that admission which he had all along been seeking: " Your problem isn't ' everywhere ' — it is this parish."

Felton spoke with genuine distress, his round face contorted: " It's the town that's to blame, Bishop, and the times."

The Bishop recalled his exit from St. Alban's rectory. He was not going to leave St. John's in any such fashion. He would go hence now, while he held the advantage:

" Nonsense. Your trouble — the whole trouble with St.

John's — is within yourself." (Those words of Dinwiddie's rang absurdly in his ears: "Some men . . . remain in . . . who are farther from faith —" He caught himself up: he would think no more of them.) "As I say, all this parish is suffering from is a too-small church-attendance. Well, that's the rector's affair. You must fill your pews." He rose and stood caressing his pectoral Cross; the light caught his amethyst ring. "I tell you as kindly — but as plainly and as peremptorily — as I can: this condition will not long be tolerated. You must increase attendance."

Felton, of course, had risen, too, but his broad shoulders were bent as if under some load all the heavier for its invisibility. His brown eyes filled with painful inquiry. "But how?"

"Eh? Why, you must attract it."

John's heart was in his repetition: "How?"

The admonisher's wide mouth went down: this was a good deal too much. "How?" Felton would have said that, had not Bishop Meeker been a bishop, he blustered. "How? It is not my place to answer. I told you long ago — before you got the call here — that the right man for this place could lead its people back to active spiritual life. If you don't know how, you will simply show yourself unfit to hold the charge."

§ 4

From John's study, the Bishop went on to the railway-station, as he had informed the protesting Litchfields he would do. He was doubly annoyed, but, as he walked along — he refused John's proffer of companionship — his wrath, from the first hotter against Dinwiddie than Felton, increased its intensity toward the former until the latter was well-nigh forgotten. After all, the rector of the broad church had acknowledged his authority: it had been as good as denied

by the high-churchman. Felton's future was in Felton's own hands, to make or mar; Dinwiddie —

As Bishop Meeker, mopping his scarlet face, came into the station's grimy car-shed, the night-train was already pulling up. Celeste Litchfield and Courtie met their episcopal superior before the ticket-grill; the husband's caustic tones attempted that heartiness which they could sometimes master:

"Nothing doin' here. We got your ticket. Stateroom reserved for you, and our man's taken your things aboard. Even the fan'll be goin'." He hurried after the men.

Celeste, meanwhile, spoke softly as she gave her hand:

"It was so lovely to have you and so horrid not to have you for longer. It — it recalled old days."

"All aboard!" yelled the conductor.

Two brakemen yelled: "All aboard!"

The Bishop's pride had been blistered by Dinwiddie; it still stung, but he was grateful for her balm. She wouldn't ask anything! Then she might as well know the facts, and they might as well be presented to her, since that was possible, in a manner combining compliment with truth:

"I saw Dr. Dinwiddie, and, although he evaded a direct reply, I am convinced you are right about him." — The Bishop's gorge rose at his persistent memory of how Dinwiddie had defied and intellectually worsted him. — "My dear, if things go on as they are going — and they will — I'll unfrock this slimy fellow for you yet."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

§ 1

FOR a long time after the Bishop had left it, John sat in his study. Once he wished that he could leave it, too — forever. Then he feared that he might have to.

They were no better than any other employers, these bishops! It mattered nothing to them that they had come up from the ranks: they were like self-made business men — self-made business men, such as Hornaday, always forgot their own apprenticeship and became slave-drivers. People might talk all they wanted about the Representatives of the Apostles: Protestant Episcopal bishops — and likely the Catholic ones as well — were only executives; they were chosen as executives, because of their executive abilities, and executive ability meant nothing except getting all the work you could out of the people that worked for you.

Well, Felton had worked hard. God knew that. But an angel for hard work and a saint for talent couldn't keep St. John's to the pitch old Meeker demanded. If there was any virtue in Holy Orders —

The doorbell rang.

Sally was long since asleep, and she slept in the back of the house. Felton went to the door.

A sick-call on this sultry night? He hoped not.

§ 2

A tall man with broad, bowed shoulders stood on the step. Behind him stooped a woman with a shawl over her head.

"What is it?" asked John as kindly as he could.

The woman courtesied; the tall man took off a straw hat, a size too small for him, and bobbed his round head. His voice was hesitant, but deep:

"Min-*ister*?"

"Yes."

"Min-*ister* Felton?"

"Yes. Won't you come in?"

The woman said something in a language with which John was wholly unacquainted. She gave the man a little push, however, and Felton, taking this for assent, led the way to his study. There he snapped on an upper light.

He saw the man as a worker, with heavy eyebrows, bristling and gray, whereunder the eyes blinked nervously — high cheek-bones — a drooping, grizzled moustache. Under the shadow of her shawl, held together by worn fingers, the woman's face betrayed only a snub nose and a twitching mouth.

"What can I do for you?"

Again the woman muttered an unintelligible phrase.

"*T'ugater*," said the man. "My daughter: where she is?"

"Your daughter? I don't think I understand. Who are you?"

"Nick, from down to the Raymond works: Nicephoros Zalokostas. T's here, she's my wife Natalie. She's *Rossa* — only not Bolshevik — but me, I'm Greek from Mytelene."

Dora's parents! John felt a little troubled — more mystified:

"I'm very glad to know you." He shook hands. "Of course I know your daughter. But how should I know where she is?"

"Ain't you her min-*ister* of t'is church she's went into?"

"She was received at Communion here today —"

Nick Zalokostas growled — or grunted. "We know t'at: we couldn't stop her."

"*Góspodoy pomíluy!*" muttered Mrs. Zalokostas and, right thumb and two first fingers together, touched her forehead, her abdomen, and then one shoulder and the other.

"Not re-confirmed," Felton hastened to explain. "That wasn't necessary, of course. But all this happened this morning. I haven't seen Dora since."

Nicephorus blinked. "Not?"

"No."

The millhand turned to his wife. She said something to him in what Felton now guessed to be Russian; Nicephorus replied in what John dimly recognized as some Greek dialect.

"I hope you've no cause to fear any harm has happened to Dora," said Felton — and was at once annoyed at the inadequacy of his words.

"We have," Zalokostas boomed — "some." His high cheek-bones were touched with red; now his tone was firm. "T'ere was somet'ing I had — Natalie and me — to talk to her about — mebbie you know what — and t'en we went, Natalie and me, to Father Dimitri; and when we come back, Menodora she's gone. House-neighbors and *philoi* say some *autokineton* come for her — mebbie Mis' Litchfield's; but we go Mis' Litchfield, and her servant tol' us nobody home. Menodora, sometime she out later'n t'is; but after what we said to her, we worried. So we come here."

"I'm sorry." John was, and looked it. "Only why do you come to me?"

The snub-nosed mother found a fragment of English speech:

"'Cause you her — How say '*Batuska*,' Nicephorus?"

"Priest — priest."

"You her priest — now." Natalie crossed herself again and, as if to ask forgiveness for the fact she mentioned, again muttered: "*Góspodoy pomíluy!*"

Some resentment John experienced at these evidences of how — amazingly — his church could be regarded by such ignorant people. However, he was much more disturbed by the possibility of mishap to their daughter.

"I am not a priest," said he. He had never before known quite how much he wasn't.

Zalokostas gaped. "You not priest?"

The workman was perplexed. His wife, as yet not quite comprehending, raised her slavic face so that John could see in it eyes of mute appeal. This couple somehow made Felton understand the importance of the sacerdotal office in the daily lives of many simple folk and, wondering if there really existed any priests in the sense in which those who so needed them envisaged priests, he momentarily regretted — for his heart was large — that he, at all events, was none. He shook his head:

"No."

"You Min-*ís*ter Felton?"

"Yes, but in our church we don't have priests — at least not in my part of our church."

"One part have — one part ain't?" Nicephorus tried to puzzle it out. "But Father Dimitri say —"

"I'm not a priest — the way you mean it."

Natalie was nudging at her husband for a translation: with puckered brows he made it. She clasped her hands, and her shawl fell away from gray hair, from wrinkled cheeks down which immediately flowed tears. Sobs broke a torrent of Russian words.

"What is it?" Felton inquired. He hoped he hadn't hurt her, but he couldn't in the least understand.

Nicephorus put one arm around his wife's waist. His free hand patted her head.

"She say: 'T'en poor Menodora she not have no priest no more!'"

"Your daughter — She has the consolation of a religion that she chose of her own free will."

Thus John, in an outburst. Yet he felt a little ashamed of it.

"Her own free will?" Zalokostas laboriously repeated. But he ended with a rising inflection.

Felton did not directly answer. He walked across the room to his desk and, without sitting down, became busy thereat. He so remained until Natalie's sobs subsided. His own emotions were mixed.

Nicephorus was saying:

". . . came you because we t'ought Menodora might be at her priest's, or —"

John couldn't be angry with these people. He looked up at last, smiling:

"You don't think I'm hiding her?"

"No," said Dora's father, gravely. "But we t'ink if she not here you mebbie know where. Mebbie you hear some-t'ing so's you know where. Not'ing in Holy Confession." He raised a horny hand. "We know you no' tell t'at. But —"

"I don't hear confessions," said Felton.

"No — not a priest. Still, all min-*ist*ers — priests and no'-priests they are shepherds, and they watch t'eir lambs — not?"

"Pleas'," pleaded Natalie, hands outstretched.

There was that about her which poignantly recalled to John his own mother. "I'm sorry, but I don't know anything and haven't heard anything. You must take my word

for it that I haven't the slightest idea where Dora is. I wish I had; but, honestly — " He put out his two hands to them; his smile frankly dimpled. " Honestly, I haven't. Of course, if I can be of any help, looking for her — "

Zalokostas had been, out of those shaded eyes of his, studying Felton intently. He said to his wife, in instinctively polite English:

" T's min-*is*ter speaks true. I see. He ain't."

His gray head shook slowly from right to left.

" *Alet'os,*" the Greek gently insisted.

Natalie's pathetic hands fumbled with the shawl, restoring it to her head. " Mebbie so."

" But, after all," John demanded. " Why are you afraid for Dora? " He understood that they were holding back something from him and was indeed himself afraid for her, though he did not know why. Still, his place was to cheer them. " She's often been out late before, you say." They did seem to look a little brighter; he pushed his slight advantage. " She's probably just gone somewhere for an automobile-ride with a friend — perhaps with Mrs. Litchfield." He hoped that it was not with a man. Sunday evening: the evening of a Communion Sunday —

" *Podäy, Gospodoy!* " said Natalie. " P'raps: dis is Sunday."

Speculating always as to what they concealed, but never inquiring its nature, Felton talked on. He was no longer the persuasive man he used to be, but he could easily convince himself, and he soon seemed to have partially convinced these unsophisticated people.

" P'raps." Zalokostas drew his huge frame together as if to armor it once more against the fear that had brought him to the rectory. " P'raps. I hope ' Yas.' " He looked pityingly at his wife. " I *t'ink* ' Yas.' "

Felton said: "If there's any one I can call up — any friend of Dora's — "

But he stopped short at the look in the deep-set eyes of Dora's father.

"Not a priest? "

Back at that again! John, still managing to smile, shook his head. He started to make clear, with difficulty, just what he did consider himself to be.

Nicephorus cut him short:

"A'right. You excuse us. We didn' un'erstan'. We're used to priests." He seemed to have lost something scarcely less valuable than that which he feared lost when he came here. "If you'd been priest, you'd un'erstan'."

Felton saw them out, the woman somewhat comforted, the man more anxious to convince her than himself convinced. On the step — when John couldn't see his face — Zalokostas suddenly said:

"It ain't no good: t'ese changes in *t'reskeia* — in religion! " His voice broke upon the hot dark with all the energy of an emotion too long suppressed. There was something terrible in its half-revelation — something yet more terrible in what it withheld. "People as is used to priests need priests. It ain't no good — "

His little wife led him away.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

§ 1

IN the study of St. Alban's rectory, Bishop Meeker's departing gesture had thrown Father Brethwald rather sharply against one of his sagging bookcases. For half-a-minute thereafter he did not move, but leaned breathlessly against the dusty volumes that had blocked his fall. Then his roving eyes encountered the Orthodox crucifix that hung on the wall opposite his writing-table. He crossed himself in the more modern, Western way. His thin lips moved devoutly.

The front door banged.

"Bishop! — Bishop Meeker!"

He ran to it. He fumbled at the familiar latch. At last he got it open.

Too late. The Bishop was gone.

Hatless, Father Brethwald began to run in pursuit between succeeding patches of darkness and lamplight. He did not pass the church; in his confusion, he took the direction from the station instead of to it.

Quite too late, he realized, when he realized his error. Besides, what would anybody think if they saw him?

He returned to the house. It was very silent. An old woman came in every morning to do the work, or half-do it, but left each evening as soon as supper was served: its dishes stood over against the next visit. Gripping the newel-post of the hall stairway, Father Brethwald called softly:

"Justine!"

No answer.

"Justine!" he called sharply.

He had never once thought about her as he had now so suddenly and terribly to think. Since his wife's death, a little rebellious he had of course once and again found his daughter to be: he set this down to youth. A little careless: youth again. Thoughtless: still youth — and never thoughtless where he was concerned. There was no sin in high spirits; to his catholic mind, there was no sin in her sometimes almost, but never observably quite, violent gaiety.

"Justine!" The sharpness disappeared.

She had seemed to perform her religious duties, if a little perfunctorily, at least regularly enough and, because as her parent he would not hear her confession, she went four times yearly to another town for that. The fact was, his long work-hours, indefatigably observed, had been of necessity too heavily laden to permit his working for her; his rare leisure his books as necessarily commanded: her ordinary comings and goings were ordered by her teachers when she was small, naturally by herself now that she was grown.

But he loved her. Next to his religion, he loved her better than anything time had left him. Her smile at him across the cheerful breakfast-table — to hear her "Hello, daddy-dear," when she flashed like a yellow-haired sylph into his dusty study and flung her strong young arms around his old neck — to see her start radiantly (she always explained her nocturnal voyages before embarking on them, and he rarely sat up for her) to some respectable dance, some chaperoned motor-ride, or to listen to the radio at the house of some friend: these things had been the bright spots in his days. Even though he possessed no liking for jazz, there was joy to hear her singing it through this house. A bad girl, that? No!

Where had she been going this evening, for a little while, after the service?

To the Prestons' — wasn't it?

Yes, he clearly remembered: the Prestons'.

He looked at his cheap watch — could barely see it by this poor gas-jet in the hall: 11:25. She must have come in while the Bishop was saying those wretched things — while Dinwiddie ran up the street. Come in and gone to sleep. She always slept at once and soundly.

"Justine!"

Still no answer.

11:25: Justine ought to be home — from the Prestons'.

He climbed the stairs, heavily. How tired he was tonight!

He tapped at her door. Silence. He entered.

All the way from the street, an electric arc-lamp threw its blue rays in here. It showed the flowered wall-paper, the chintzes, the dressing-table with photographs betwixt mirror and frame. On one chair lay the dress she had thrown there when she was afraid, of course, that she would be late for church. The bed —

She was late again. This room was empty.

Had he failed in his duty to her? Bitterly he admitted failure. But was the gossip correct? This girl who reminded him of a jonquil — this girl, his own flesh and blood — this physical replica of the devout wife of his best years — It couldn't be!

Out late last night to a dance, she had napped for a brief fifteen minutes before supper this evening — thrown herself upon the bed, she told him. Here was the impression that her golden head left in the pillow. Father Brethwald bent above it; he put his wrinkled face into it.

A pedant. A dry man of God. A dull, emotionless scholar —

He was crying. . . .

It wasn't true!

He went down stairs to the telephone. . . . He was

afraid to call the Prestons'. . . . Then he was ashamed of his fear — ashamed of his disloyalty to his daughter. He called the number.

The response was a long while coming. It came sleepily:

"Hello!"

"I — This is her father. — I was wondering when Justine was coming home."

"Justine Dinwiddie? — Oh, is that you, Doctor? Excuse me. — Why, Justine's not been here."

§ 2

St. Alban's was a Norman structure with a good tower and a small porch, standing in a grove of hemlocks some yards from the street. At the rear of this lot, a passage, completely closed, ran from the chancel to the rectory, and along that passage Father Brethwald staggered.

The odor of dead incense filled the church, and a cool darkness accentuated rather than relieved by the glimmer of one tiny lamp flickering in the east. Toward that he unsteadily went as a child lost in the night might grope toward some faint gleam from a home-window. It was he who, with Raymond money lavishly provided, had built St. Alban's; here he lovingly labored through long years; before his high altar he once hoped to be buried:

> "And hear the blessed mutter of the Mass
> And see God made and eaten — "

He needed no better light; he knew every inch of the way. It was not his knowledge that deserted him.

He passed the Lady Chapel, genuflected before the centre of the chancel-steps and climbed them. He opened the brass gate that gave upon the sanctuary: that tiny lamp burned

now between him and the golden pyx enshrining the Host. Through his stunned brain rushed the opening words of *O salutaris Hostia*:

" O, saving Victim opening wide
The gate of Heav'n to man below,
Our foes press on from every side:
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow! "

Darkness behind. Darkness to north and south. But here in the east this brave little lamp and behind it — That.

Father Brethwald prostrated himself.

" O my God! " His stiffened lips repeated the familiar Roman prayer, because his heart failed him. " I firmly believe (firmly believe) all the sacred truths . . . because Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived."

And then suddenly it was as if his soul cried out in the appeal so carefully enshrined of the Orthodox:

" O Lord of Hosts, be with me, for I have none other help but Thee in time of trouble! O Lord of Hosts, be with me and have mercy upon me! "

§ 3

Why, an hour later, he did not leave the church as he had entered it, he would have found it hard to say. He thought himself entirely comforted and entirely calm; he was certain that Justine could give him a true and guiltless explanation — that she was even now returned and innocently abed — and, having asked forgiveness for a passing lack of faith, he was sure that he had received pardon and grace. He meant to seek the passage to the rectory, yet something — one of those unaccountable impulsions which so frequently were motives for action in a life whose thought only logic ruled —

something sent him down the central aisle to the main door.

"The house-door," said this something, "you left unlatched for Justine: you can get in that way. Go out this."

He knew just where the key was. He turned it softly, as he had walked softly, for unnecessary noises were offensive in God's house.

The power that moved him electrified his arm. It opened the church-door with startling quickness and flung him on to the narrow porch outside.

The same street-lamp that lighted Justine's bedroom in the rectory illuminated part of this porch, but the rest was in deep shadow. Through the shadow, two figures moved in startled unison. Then one of them, that of a young man, leaped the railings and ran with panic-clatter down street.

The other cried out — in a woman's voice. Father Brethwald grabbed. Seized the woman. By a strength not his own dragged her into the light: Justine.

"You — " She choked between frightened laughter and the tears of culpability — "Daddy, you scared me half to death!"

Her hat was under his feet: it had been flung on the floor when he appeared. Her yellow hair was fallen across her eyes. He could not see her face, but in his ears her laughter rang false.

"What are you doing here?"

Rage shot the words from his mouth — rage from one who had found it so easy to school all his life to mildness. Rage fed upon itself and vociferated for more.

"Why, daddy — " Justine scarcely knew him.

"Answer me!"

"I won't! Let me go. You're hurting me."

He hurt her more. "You lied about going to the Prestons'. You didn't go. You never meant to go. I telephoned. Now

answer me: what were you doing here, and who was that man? "

After all, the girl was muscularly the stronger. She wrenched herself free, and regained strength of will through the physical achievement. She faced him, panting, her fists clenched, her eyes sullen through her hair.

" Something's happened to you. You're crazy! I won't tell you anything, after this. I don't have to. I'm grown up — and you can't make me."

§ 4

It was getting on to three o'clock when Felton was at length roused from a dream of Alice Averell by the persistent ringing of the telephone beside his bed. He kept the 'phone there in case some ill parishioner should need him in the night, but the need was not frequent, and he was latterly for more than the obvious reason content that it shouldn't be.

Alice —

He had had a dreadful time getting to sleep until he resolutely turned his thoughts from Bishop Meeker's thunderings to the thought of her. Besides, once he had married her, whom he loved, he would doubtless be able to recapture that lost Zeal, the loss of which lay hidden at the core of all this criticism.

Meantime, he must find some way to improve conditions in St. John's. " Must! " The Bishop had said so, and the Bishop had become a stern old man of his word. Must — but how?

How? — He twisted and turned. The windows were open, but not one breath of air came through their copper screens on such a night. — How —

And then there was that queer call of the parents of Dora

Zalokostas. . . . Had anything really happened to Dora? . . . And what did her strange father mean about changes in religion? . . .

He had to sleep. There was never anything to be gained by worry in the night-watches. He would think of Alice only.

Of course she was away now, and he hadn't heard from her. Wouldn't: they had not been given time to agree on arrangements for correspondence, and John was no letter-writer. Nothing, indeed, had even been said between them — nothing definite, binding. But he felt sure of her, and sure there would be no barriers raised by the Judge and Mrs. Averell. They liked Felton and freely showed that they did; only today — yesterday — after the confirmation and Communion service at St. John's, the Judge had been saying proudly how Tom had settled down and how the father believed this was due to Felton's influence, working through Alice.

Alice. . . .

"*Br-r-r-r-r-ing!*"

"Confound it!"

John sat up in bed. He switched on the light and snapped up the telephone:

"Yes — yes — *yes!*"

"St. John's rectory?"

A woman! The man spoke somewhat less abruptly:

"St. John's."

"Is Mr. Felton there?"

He knew now who it was that called him. "At the 'phone."

"This is Celeste Litchfield."

"I thought I recognized your voice. Good evening, Mrs. Litchfield." — What next?

"It's nearer being morning, and not a good one, either. I

don't see how you ever recognized my voice, for I'm dreadfully hoarse and dreadfully worried. I've been talking for hours and hours. And here at last I've got to talk to you."

Her voice was more than usually husky. Harsh, too. And audibly excited.

"Don't apologize for waking me, Mrs. Litchfield. If I can be of any service in any way — "

"You can. You've got to be. I want you to be sure to come over here first thing in the morning. I knew well enough what was the matter with Dora Zalokostas, but of course I didn't want to say anything till she was safe in our Church. Well, I've been regularly cross-examining her ever since I saw the Bishop off — and that old father and mother of hers coming to the door and asking if she was here! I sent out word I wasn't! Mr. Felton, Tom Averell's got her in trouble. He belongs to St. John's. Anyhow, his father's your senior warden. And you're St. John's rector. You've got to go to Judge Averell and make him make Tom marry her. It's terrible, the way he's treated her. After all I've done for her! I won't stand it. And if you want my opinion, you'd better perform the ceremony pretty soon, too."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

§ 1

NOW he knew why Zalokostas and his Russian wife were worried over their daughter's absence! Now John knew what it was that they had kept back!

Throughout the rest of that night, there was no more sleep for Felton. He lay abed, thinking until his spinal cord seemed to have tied itself into an aching knot at the base of his skull. Forgetful of slippers, he walked the floor barefoot until sheer muscular weariness made him lie down again. Sleep? He knew too well Celeste's influence with the Bishop — too well he knew the character of Judge Averell.

John's status before Bishop Meeker already quivered; its underpinning was half consumed by dry rot, and the blows that the Bishop had tonight struck weakened it to the last degree of endurance. More blows, final blows, were indicated, unless the rot were expeditiously removed: concerning means for such removal, Felton was at a desperate loss. If he now antagonized as powerful a friend of Meeker as Celeste, total collapse must inevitably follow. Besides, she had a case: people of John's sort and the Bishop's still believed that a seducer should " make an honest woman of his victim " ; Tom — confound it! — was a nominal member of St. John's congregation, where most of the members were little more than nominal, and his father was senior warden.

But Tom's sister was Alice!

The Judge, for all his hail-fellow-well-met manner as Doncaster's political boss, was pompous and at heart absurdly

sensitive concerning his position in life: high-tempered, too, like most men who combine a facile good nature with pomposity. That Sunday noon among the churchyard's tombs, Alice — oh, yes, she wanted Tom to marry Justine! — had correctly described her father as, outside certain limits, hard. Essentially, she was an obedient child: if John presented himself at the Henrietta Street house in the rôle of an accuser demanding a legal union between Sherwood Averell's son and the daughter of a Greek mill-hand, the rector's recently rosy chances for winning Alice would be withered by a single breath.

Felton did think about Tom and Dora: upon the inundating waters of his mental plane almost every unpleasant fact within his knowledge swirled again and again. He had ever held instinctively, almost subconsciously, the protestant view of every sin as a deadly sin and, having held himself distant from this one to which, among first experiences of it, the most affectionate are the most prone, he naturally abhorred it as the most deadly. Still, he felt sorrow for the boy — rather a mocker, John said, but not really a bad lad — and for his paramour (Felton's word for Dora), who had not failed to touch the minister during his recent intimate interview with her. The trouble was that the trouble of these peccant lovers made such insoluble trouble for John.

No! Contrary to his usual conviction that, in these affairs, the male was the villain, Felton clutched at the memory of Tom's drunken condition on the night of Alice's return from the south and pronounced young Averell, finally, a wild youth at heart. Dora, then? She hadn't seemed that sort, but you could never tell about women: perhaps she, on her part, had schemed for marriage and social advancement. What was it she meant, there in John's study, about telling him something or other, if he were a priest? This? Well, what if he had been — in her sense of the office? What if

she'd confessed? How could that have helped matters for Felton? It would have added to his problems the problem of whether he ought to present her for communion. He was glad she hadn't told. Most likely the culprits were both culprits through wantonness.

He could not think much about them, anyhow. Human nature, the law of self-preservation, demanded his thought for a way around what they had done to him. Celeste's demand that followed the Bishop's threats; Judge Averell's rage, if Celeste's powerfully backed demand were not complied with: enough to drive any man mad!

John got up and walked again. The heat of the oncoming morning was stifling.

He wished Alice were in town, because of the parish tangle; he thanked God she was absent, because of this *impasse* about her father. . . .

How could he tell the Judge? —

How could he not?

He prayed for a way 'round, and, while he prayed, dawn came into the room. It showed him the once bright wallpaper, put on when he first came to St. John's, now faded; it showed the cheap pine furniture. One of the first rays of sunlight struck a frame surrounding three photographs: his mother, whom he still loved, as she was scarcely a month before her death, the face of an old woman who had suffered much and at last been comforted; himself as a boy in knickerbockers, alert, precocious, merry; and again himself in his vestments as a priest, a picture taken for Mrs. Felton shortly after his ordination, handsome, hopeful — presented in soft brown tones by the best and most expensive photographer in town. The light-beams spread to the mirror of the dressing-table, and in that he saw his present self kneeling with arms outstretched across a rumpled bed as fervently as a Latin kneels before a shrine.

The change! Still handsome, still recognizably that same Felton; but with something added — and something had been taken away.

He scrambled to his feet. It was only this sleepless night, he said. As he rose, he saw the calendar that hung beside the dressing-table: a calendar with a separate sheet for each day of the year, each sheet bearing a scriptural text; the miniature infant-class of his Sunday School had given him last Christmas, and, as he went to bed of an evening, he methodically tore off the sheet for the finished day. Notwithstanding the disturbance of Bishop Meeker's visit, John had not failed in this when he last undressed; and now he saw the record:

August 7

Sunday

X Sunday After Trinity —

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

— Acts XXVI, 18.

(From the Second Lesson for the Day.)

N.B: First Sunday of the Month.

The first Sunday of the month: since Celeste made her demand over the telephone, Felton had forgotten that. An

old custom of St. John's, long antedating the current incumbency, insisted on full Communion Service — no matter how few attended — following Morning Prayer at each "First Sunday," even when, as this time, there had been an administration the day before: that dispensed with only the pre-breakfast-hour service. Now, Celeste had commanded his early presence at her house; for her "early" could not mean a minute before nine; on this occasion it probably meant later, for she, too, had had a hard night — yet he must see her and try to persuade her before 10:30.

How could he? —

How could he tell the Judge? —

How could he not?

§ –

The dining-room in St. John's rectory was well furnished, as were all the rooms that Felton had furnished with an eye to his mother's use of them. Although, being next to the study, it also looked upon the churchyard, its interior was bright enough to counteract that *memento mori.* John sat down in his usual place, with his back to the graves, but with a glory of sunlight descending over him. He rang the bell, but did not look up as the servant entered.

"Good morning, Sally."

"Good morning, Mr. Felton."

"I shan't want anything except coffee this morning, Sally — black."

Sally peered at him. "No hot-cakes? — Ain't you so well today?"

"I'm quite well, thank you."

"You don't look so well. You look like a ghost."

"Just the black coffee, please."

"Mr. Felton, you had ought to eat something." She liked him: most people did. "You've got communion an' all — "

"Just the coffee."

§ 3

There was no house-to-house delivery in Doncaster on Sundays, but the post-office was open for an hour or two early in the day, when a box-distribution of letters was made. Felton, as did most men of town-standing, rented a box for use at this distribution, and Sally laid the result beside his plate. Usually, he ran through the pile for a preliminary scrutiny of the envelopes; this morning he lacked the requisite interest: he took them up and opened them in that haphazard order in which they had been placed here.

Some bills, of course: with admirable promptitude, the local merchants generally got their bills to you on the first day of the month, but there were sure to be some laggards. Here was the account with Dr. Colfax, the dentist, brought down to date; a dentist was expensive, but a necessity: there was no dentist in the congregation of St. John's. And here was the tailor's reminder, with a "Please remit" scrawled across its foot: well, decent clothes were an asset, even a spiritual asset, to a minister — people were more ready to accept a generally well-dressed man than a man neglectful of his appearance. Felton couldn't see why it was, but, even when he didn't pay all his bills promptly, he was always now somewhere about twenty-five dollars short.

A letter from an old acquaintance of his General Theological days: "Why are soul-doctors worse paid than body-doctors? . . . No wonder we can't fill our churches. . . . They deprive us of all impetus. . . . Only hope to attract people in keeping abreast of the times . . . larger view . . . greater tolerance . . . wider opinions . . . in step with science —" John didn't finish.

And a letter from Valeria Neff: a self-soul-searching letter, written in the night watches — all Doncaster seemed to have remained awake last night. Valeria had heard some of the

congregation titter when she went up the aisle for confirmation. Her first " reaction " had been the sin of anger against these deriders, who, she was well aware, thought she changed her religion too often; but she had been philosophically thinking it over. Ought one to change so frequently? All religions were really one. And if they were, should she not cleave to that one which recognized the fact and sought — and achieved — a synthesis? Well, who did this save the Bahá'ís? A strange coincidence had befallen: when she came home after church, there waited her, mailed from the Holy Land by a long-forgotten friend, Isabella Brittingham's " Revelations of Bahá'u'lláh," Myron Phelps' " Life and Teachings of ' Abbas Effendi,' " and Gabriel Stacy's rare little brochure, *Du règne de Dieu et de l'Agneau.* She had read them through at a sitting — and hoped dear Mr. Felton would.

" Life," wrote Valeria, " is progressive, so revelation *must* be. To each age is given a fuller and ever advancing measure of Truth — its Manifestation. We must acknowledge all Manifestations, and ' all ' begins for us with the Manifestation of our own age. Once there was Moses and the Law, again there was Jesus and Mahomet, but now there is the New Manifestation, the Manifestation of and for our own age — Man Yuz-hiruhu'llâh."

In brief — only, she was lengthy — Miss Neff, her love for Episcopalianism undiminished, had become a Báhaíst. She signed her name, affectionately, with the Number of Unity and the Number of All Things.

Felton, who had vouchsafed little more attention to the intricacies of this epistle than to the text of the preceding, had for it, as he tossed it aside, one comment:

" Lucky she didn't read those books a day earlier."

His congregation was reduced by one. Suppose, though, he earned the Litchfields' gratitude? Suppose, since the

Litchfields had definitely and for so long abandoned St. Alban's — No, there was still Dinwiddie's claim. And the price! John could never tell the Judge.

There was one letter left. It lay face downwards. He turned it over:

From Alice!

"My dear Friend —"

Alice wrote from that mountain-resort, and from bed. She wrote tenderly, yet without specific committal to his interpretation of their relationship. There had been a slight automobile accident. A broken leg. Only that, yet an ugly break. She would probably have to remain where she was "for ever so long."

§ 4

It was in her breakfast-room with its wide view of peaceful river and hills that Celeste waited him: she sat before a coffee-urn and put down an untasted cup as he crossed the threshold. Celeste could avoid politeness without being rude; she wasted no breath in invitations:

"Ask me anything you think I wouldn't say over the 'phone. Then you can put it all up to the Judge at church, after service."

Her lace boudoir-cap left much of her hair and all of her face free: his usual encounters with her having occurred when she wore one of those hats which hide the brows and shade the eyes, Felton experienced even more acutely than ever that sense of really seeing her for the first time. Her swarthy cheeks showed no fatigue; her gaze was darkly brilliant, and her red mouth firm. She wore a kimona of flowered silk; its folds caressed firm breasts, its sleeves fell away from strong brown arms.

"Well," said John — he didn't know where to begin, and he had an odd feeling that, even if he wasn't a priest, so much as Nicephorus and Natalie Zolokostas had said to him was at least in the nature of what lawyers call a privileged communication. "I certainly feel I ought to have a few more facts." Across the table from Celeste was a cover as yet unclaimed: evidently, Courtlandt Litchfield lay late abed of Sundays. Felton took a chair drawn up nearer his hostess: he wished her husband were here.

"It's just this," she said in her throaty voice: "I'd been on to Dora's condition for weeks, but I didn't let her see I was till last night. Then I had her in here, late, and put it to her straight. At first, of course, she lied about it, only she soon saw there was nothing in that, and then she came across." It was plain that Celeste had undertaken to administer the third degree solely out of a sense of duty to her protégée; the married woman did not enjoy it any more than the unmarried, and its memory drove her to invective against the other person whom she had involved. "I think it's the rottenest trick of Tom Averell!"

"Is there any hurry?"

"Hurry?" Celeste's brows came together. "Why, if there were months there'd be hurry — and there aren't. I drove down for her last night after I'd seen the Bishop off, and of course we had to pass old Al Bumpus's saloon — everybody knows he's been selling green bootleg ever since prohibition came in — and there was Tom coming out of that place with his arm around Justine Dinwiddie." The speaker loosed her condemnatory gesture: the fingers of her right hand outspread, their bright magenta nails pointing earthward. "He'll be marrying her, next thing you know. I should say there was hurry!"

Visits to a dispensary of illicit liquor did not appear to Felton in the light of marital preliminaries, but he was

pained to hear this confirmation of the rumors regarding Justine. Balancing that was his memory of what Alice had said of Tom and Justine marrying. "You're sure?"

"Isn't there always a light over Bumpus's door?" Celeste demanded. "And look at me — do you see any cataracts on my eyes?"

John saw eyes very angry, and very handsome. "Oh, I dare say you are right," he wearily admitted.

"Of course I am. And I asked Dora if she'd told Tom, and she said yes, but he wouldn't have anything more to do with her. You see, the fellow's got what he wanted out of her, so now he thinks he'll make up to Justine. — Well, he won't: I won't let him."

It brought Felton to that crucial inquiry which he had dreadingly come here to make. "And Dora admitted it was Tom?"

"That was responsible for her condition?" Celeste, despite her habitual directness and unconventionality, had a horror of sexual lapses; she would mention them only by conventional circumlocutions. "I tell you I guessed it long ago."

"But did she admit it?" How he hoped Dora hadn't!

His hostess hitched her chair toward him. She crossed her legs and clasped her hands over a silken knee; he saw that her slim ankles were bare and her feet thrust into Turkish slippers; the feet worked in and out at the heels: her only real sign of nervousness.

"Mr. Felton, don't get the idea I was brutal to that girl; I had a job that had to be done, and I went through with it. That's my way. Didn't I even stall when her parents rang at the door? I did go through with it, though. I asked her who it was. She wouldn't tell. I didn't want her to think I'd been snooping too much around her affairs, and so I

didn't come right out with Tom Averell's name. I just ran over the names of all the men I could think of, except Tom: Charley Schwarz, the Prestons' boy, that Bert Long, you and even Mr. Hornaday — and she shook her head at each of 'em. So I told her: 'Well, you owe it to me to tell me, after all I've done for you, and I can't think of anybody else except young Averell and Mr. Litchfield. I don't suppose you want me to believe it's my own husband, do you?' Then she wilted and admitted it was Tom. She didn't cry; she just put her head down and sort of shook. It was awful." Celeste's anger flared again. Dora was a good girl — she is a good girl. — And he's the lowest hound in Doncaster!"

It did not occur to either of those persons at the breakfast-table that perhaps there would be small kindness in marrying a good girl to a low hound; but something suggested itself to John as a way around his own difficulty without hurt to anybody concerned. His saddened brown eyes could not meet Celeste's frequently when such topics as the present were under discussion; they had been searching the green terraces, the wide river and the pine-hooded heights beyond. This woman's indignation was sincere: might it not be further used to good purpose?

"Mrs. Litchfield," he said, "you seem to have managed this thing very well so far, and I'm afraid I'd only bungle it. Why don't you talk to the Judge yourself?"

"Me?" It was as if he had gratuitously insulted her. She sat up straight; her full lips drew back to a thin line over her strong teeth. "I can talk about this to you because you're a clergyman; if I had to, I could talk about it to anybody — but I don't have to. I had a hard job, and I did it. Now it's your job: Judge Averell's one of your vestry; this good-for-nothing son of his is a member of your parish, and so's Dora. What's a clergyman for, outside of his chancel?

Here's right where your duty in the matter begins — yours and nobody else's! "

So that hope passed. Its departure raised a certain rage in John.

" If Dora is a member of my congregation," he said, " it is because you rather smuggled her in there, Mrs. Litchfield, when you knew — "

" Of course I did! Who needed Holy Communion more? If the Church isn't meant to save minors, what's the use of a church at all? "

Such logic — amazing! What was that text about not calling the righteous, but sinners, to repentance? Felton used to have these things pat. No use. He said:

" The church is the place for penitent sinners. Was Dora penitent? "

Celeste owned a rare honesty. " No, she wasn't. At least not up to the time she left me here. At first, when I put the thing up to her, before we'd come to who it was, she'd just say over and over: ' I love him, and what a person does for real love can't be wrong.' I was shocked at that; but I'll bring her 'round to repentance after the wedding. Away back at the start, what I had to do was to get her regularly into the Church so she'd be where repentance could do her some good when it did come."

John saw that there was nothing to be gained by pointing out the fallacy here involved — nothing except the turning of a share of Celeste's animosity in his own direction. He looked at his watch: getting on to service-time.

Perhaps she did receive a glimmer of her paralogism. After all, she had once been a High-Church woman and must know what most people thought about the reception of communion unworthily. Anyhow, she was seeking a declarative refuge:

" No, sir. If you won't do your duty by making Judge

Averell make Tom do his, why I'll get Courtie for Dora's lawyer and have him file a suit against Tom in court tomorrow! "

For one instant Felton was sorely tempted to let this alternative move to accomplishment. But he couldn't do that. Alice loved her brother, and in any event open scandal must be averted.

Somehow.

How?

Celeste's mention of her husband made John wonder if he couldn't enlist easy-going Courtlandt's good offices: after all, this whole case were better discussed among males.

" Mr. Litchfield isn't up yet? "

" No, and he won't be before church." She read the rector's thoughts. " There's no use applying to him. He doesn't know anything about all this yet. I didn't mention it to him before, because it wasn't my secret, then. Last night, when I went to get Dora, I left him at the station, and he walked home and went to bed."

Felton tried another way:

" But, Mrs. Litchfield, why's it necessary to go to the Judge at all? "

" Not go to the Judge? "

" No. Why not go straight to Tom and let him and Dora elope to Elkton, or somewhere, and be married? Then nobody else need ever know about all this — not if Tom and Dora went to live in another town."

Celeste marked off her words with an index-finger on a saucer's edge. " If you go to Tom, he'll go to another town fast enough — alone. He'll run away from her. That's what he's like."

" It will about kill Mrs. Averell," said John, recalling Alice's words on a minor occasion. (What, he wondered, would it do to Alice?) " And it may do Dora more harm

than good. The Judge is a hard man, really; he'll make Tom marry the girl, of course; but then, as likely as not, he'll send the pair of them away without a cent to live on."

"I'll take care of Dora's finances," Celeste shook her bobbed black hair. "No, I can't help what the Judge does. Tom ought to have thought of that before he made love to Dora. — Love! "

From down in the town came the peal of church-bells. John rose hurriedly. Everything was as tangled as when he arrived here, and yet he must go. "I must go," he said.

"Wait a minute. There's lots of time. I'll send you in one of our cars. Mr. Felton, I asked you to come up because I thought you had a right to know all that I knew, but it looks as if you came only to get out of doing your duty."

His round, brown face was a confession, and his words substantiated it. "I said I'd bungle the thing. I admit it's my duty, but I admit I don't like it." He thought of Courtie again: why not make that thought concrete? — "Your husband's a lawyer: how about sending him in that capacity — not of course to bring suit? "

"Why drag in poor Courtie? I won't have him do the dirty work. If he's to be Dora's attorney, he'll sue, and that's that; if he isn't, he won't touch the case." Suddenly her eyes narrowed. "I believe you're afraid of the Judge on your own account. You needn't be: if the Averells leave St. John's, Courtie and I'll come in. We'd be a lot more useful to your parish than they've ever been, anyhow."

She, whom he knew so little, knew him too well: Felton realized how often of late the thought of the Litchfields as members of his congregation had hovered in his mind; but of course he couldn't take them, when the strict rules of the game still supported St. Alban's title to them — and it wasn't a question of losing the Averells; it was a question of losing Alice. A bribe! John stiffened.

"I don't have to be offered any extra inducement to do my duty; but —

She rose brightly. She rang for a car. She asked Felton:

"Then you will?"

As her demand stood, either he, as the proper person, and nobody else, must bear an ultimatum to the Judge, or, by refusal, he and nobody else would be responsible for a nasty suit against the Judge's son:

"I only mean there are reasons why —"

Felton hesitated. She had a thorough belief in her cause — in all her causes — yet she notoriously possessed also ready sympathies for personal appeal. He lifted a troubled hand and smoothed back his damp hair. He wanted to say: "It's not fair; I'm in love with Alice Averell — let me off." But he couldn't say it now. Those church-bells were clamorour, time insistent. Could he gain time? It seemed to him now that, if he could see Celeste again, when minutes pressed less heavily, he might so tell her the truth as to win himself immunity, and save the Averells scandal, by the appointment of some substitute messenger. He concluded:

"I've got to go: I've a service, you understand. I can't explain now. The thing can wait a few hours. If I can have a half-hour more with you later — There's something I must tell you —"

Perhaps she saw her victory in his hesitation. She had one of her quick softenings:

"Very well. Come to lunch. Do."

"Thanks."

She went with him to the wide hall and the foot of the stairs that led to the upper floor of her house.

"Then run along now — and be thinking it over. I'm going to wake Courtie and dress. I'll be late, but I think," she smiled, "I'll come down and hear your sermon."

John sighed relief: even postponement was a gain. It was almost automatically that he remarked, at leaving her:

"We'll be glad to have you, though it won't be much of a sermon, this day, I'm afraid — and you know you really belong at St. Alban's."

Already she was on the stairs:

"Don't you worry about that. After a mighty little while, there won't be any St. Alban's — or any Dinwiddie, anyhow. We'll have excuse enough for leaving there. The last thing Bishop Meeker said to me last night was he was going to unfrock the Doctor!"

§ 5

As the car ran downhill, Felton rigorously tried to banish his own troubles and make room for distress at those of Father Brethwald. What would become of a dispossessed man so old and so unworldly? The means — the grounds — for this deposition mattered little: there were plenty, of a technical sort, to choose from. The point was that the thing would be done: Celeste was a person of power, and Bishop Meeker's recent attitude toward John revealed that hierarch in full war-paint.

"He'd just left Dinwiddie's when he came to me," thought Felton. "No wonder he was on his hind legs!"

The idea of saving Father Brethwald did not appear: he ought to be warned — although the Bishop had probably attended thereto — but saved from such opposition he couldn't be.

Dinwiddie gone, St. Alban's would inevitably vanish, too. Only the Raymond money had created it, only its rector's pertinacity continued its being, once that money's support was withdrawn. Now there would exist no reason for two Episcopal churches in Doncaster. A merger must result. Much as Felton regretted the catastrophe in as far as it hurt

Dinwiddie, there was no denying the likelihood of its eventual benefit to St. John's.

The car reached level ground. It began to thread streets of uniform two-story dwellings, where the better class of workers lived.

If the remnant of St. Alban's congregation could be diverted from drifting into other sects, it was incumbent on the remaining Episcopal rector to divert them. They had the habit of church-going; Celeste had inculcated that among her employees, whereas the present people of St. John's . . .

If the Litchfields could be secured, without improper compromise . . .

§ 6

In the business-part of town, little Ernest Grigg hailed the car. He was in an English cutaway-coat, and a shining English top-hat covered his bald head:

"I say, give a chap a lift, will you? There's a good fellow."

One had to consent. "But I'm going to church," said John.

"Thanks awfully." Grigg clambered in and smiled over his gray Vandyck beard. "So'm I." He settled himself with more thought to his own comfort than that of his host.

"The fair Celeste's chariot, what? "

Felton evaded that. "You don't come very often."

"A jolly lot oftener than's good for me: it shakes my unfaith. It's just one o' my pernicious habits, but I pretend to myself I do it to see how far you dominies are progressing from Christianity."

"I thought you thought it was each man's sect's particular dogma that he was leaving behind."

"Oh, they're over the horizon long ago! Amusin', I call

that. I was at Ike Rosenbaum's synagogue last Sunday: they've turned into a Reformed Jewish Congregation, you know, and chucked the Saturday Sabbath."

(Could Celeste really be persuaded to lenience? John wondered.) "Yes?"

"Rather. Sunday before that I took in the Barnes M. E. — Brother Ivins let it slip perfectionism wasn't top-hole with him any more. He seems to think what he calls 'the advance of the young people with the times' can't stick Instantaneous Sanctification."

(Felton believed he could persuade Celeste. She had a good heart, under her prejudices, and all the world did love a lover.) "Indeed?"

"Anything to fill the pews — the only trouble is, nothing does. 'Broadness': that's the word they try to conjure with; they all think a thing's fine if it's big. They're so cocky about Unity that they're dropping everything. By and by they won't have anything left to unite on. Even the Catholics won't stand pat. They mayn't cut out much, but they'll have a new doctrine to add to their next council. You'll see."

John said nothing. He didn't have to say anything, however. Grigg resumed:

"Your Christian Scientist soprano's begun sending a secret chit to Dr. Orr whenever she's ill enough to feel it; and Sam Lee, the laundryman, tells me on the quiet, when he tries to give me one sock too few, that he doesn't think much of the precepts of Confucius any more. They're all Camerons without Cameron's pluck."

Felton recovered himself sufficiently to inquire:

"How is Cameron doing?"

"Queer thing about him." Grigg tilted his head to one side and looked upward from the corners of his small eyes. "The other day I thought I'd cheer our Baptist friend,

Pastor Weir, telling him how the Protestants didn't even invent their own idea of Communion — stole it from old Scotus Erigena in the Ninth Century: only a '*memoria corpis et sanguinis Christi*,' you know. Well, following that Johannes's trail, I came across a monk-chap — name of Gottschalk, about 850 A.D. — and, by Jove, doesn't he turn out to be the first blighter to go St. Augustine one better! Said if there was predestination to Heaven, there must be predestination to Hell: the Redemption didn't work for the damned-to-begin-with. I told Cameron. Now, you'd think Cameron'd be glad to hear Calvin stole his pet theory from somebody else. But he wasn't. He went down to Bumpus's place and got drunk. Fact is, I had to give him the sack."

"Oh!" John felt it. "I'm sorry. Don't you think you could let him have another chance?"

"Don't believe I can, old thing. It wasn't his first offense. You see, I had him on the road, and he got despondent because he couldn't get orders. People learned he'd been a minister and cut his stick, so they wouldn't trust him."

"His reasons for leaving his church were a credit to his honesty."

"I know it. But there you are: people mayn't be churchgoers themselves, but they never feel sure of a man that's been a parson and quit."

The car drew up before St. John's.

§ 7

Far at the other end of town, under the gilt onion-cupolas of that little church which stands where the factories stop and the fields begin, bearded Father Dimitrius Yisikoff — being, as ever, without a deacon — intoned in "a tongue understanded of the people":

"For the peace of the whole world, the stability of God's holy churches, and for the union of them all, let us pray to the Lord."

And his people responded:

"Lord, have mercy!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

§ 1

IN St. John's, Felton's thoughts had never been less upon the service of Morning Prayer than they were today. He had never read a perfunctorily written sermon more perfunctorily than that for this first Sunday in August.

"To turn them from darkness to light — " He had composed his sermon early in the week, choosing his text from the Second Lesson for the day, but he had not since gone over his composition. It was not enough that the Church should have certain ministers in savage lands, so that the Gospel might be preached there: we must give loyal financial support to those pioneers. More: the injunction was to preach the faith to all nations —

Much such a glow passed through the east-window as had passed through on the day of John's ordination; it softened the somewhat harsh lines of the church's interior; it bore a restful warmth. Yet it lulled only what was now the usual small congregation: a Preston or two, horse-jawed Hornaday, dozing sexton Leller and so on. Then here were Mrs. Averell and the Judge — not Tom.

The Judge!

Not alone the heathen were in darkness: Home Missions must also be remembered. Through out this great country of ours there were spots where still lingered a night as deep as that which brooded over Africa —

Felton thought about poor Alice, injured, in pain, all her zest toward the athletic life shackled, for the time, to an in-

valid's bed. He saw Grigg's shining bald head cocked just above a forward pew: here, at all events, was no usual attendant — was rather a distracting one. And, away down there near the door: a crumpled figure that looked like a caricature of the once-Rev. Beza Cameron whose Covenanter forebear had died a martyr to Calvinism.

And above all we must never forget the existence of a duty aside from money-giving, though money-giving should never be minimized. In a sense — a very deep and high sense — we had all to be missionaries turning our less fortunate neighbors "from darkness to light": all of us must be such missionaries: parish-layman as much as parish-rector —

John felt, behind him in the choir-stalls, the quarrelsome glances that passed from under the mortar-board of Irma Olin in her white vestments to the face of Mrs. Erdman under her mortar-board, and back again — with interest. What a pitchy cauldron a parish was, to be sure!

The Judge —

Celeste must be persuaded.

"To turn them from darkness to light." — Yet, it was incumbent upon every man and woman, said the preacher, to remember the command: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may . . . glorify your Father which is in Heaven." —

Celeste Litchfield came in so quietly that scarcely anybody, except Felton, saw her. She, who generally created a turmoil wherever she went, entered, sober in mien and dress, and sat down in an otherwise empty pew not far from the creature that looked so oddly like Cameron. Of course, she was scandalously late, but she was unheeded. Late: well, John had warned her that this sermon would prove a poor one: she hadn't missed much, notwithstanding how little of it remained to be said.

Celeste in this odd mood!

Yes, he would persuade her.

He rounded out his theme — came by obvious steps to his conclusion. The only way to make men glorify God because of you was the way of right living and the way of good works:

> "Nor knowest thou what argument
> Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent."

Right-living: temperance, purity, simplicity, the observance of all the prohibitions of God and of all the just prohibitions of man. Good works: charity — tolerance — kindliness — forgiveness — sympathy. . . . "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

He returned from pulpit to chancel and, after the offertory had been made, allowed an interval for those to tiptoe out who did not come to remain for the communion. They went in creaking shoes, but he hardly saw them: the service would now soon be over, and his difficulty about Tom Averell —

"Dearly beloved in the Lord, ye who mind to come to the holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup. For as the benefit is great . . . so is the danger . . .

"Ye who do truly and earnestly repent . . ."

And the General Confession, after which John's voice:

"Almighty God . . . pardon and deliver you from all your sins. . . ."

He knelt to say the Prayer of Consecration, the Oblation and the Invocation. As he made his own communion, he

heard the shuffling steps of those who advanced for communion at the altar-rail. They were kneeling there, heads lowered, when he turned with the bread and walking to the first upon his left — it was Judge Averell; he was always first — began:

"The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul —"

At the opposite extremity of the line, he saw Celeste.

"— unto —"

Incredible.

He looked again.

Incredible — but true.

That little black hat: he didn't remember ever having seen it before entrance into St. John's a quarter-hour since; but even it could not now shade her face beyond decisive recognition. No, nor the bend of her head. There was the saffron of the cheek. There was the red of the lips.

"— unto —"

There, finally, were — clasped — the jeweled fingers, with flashing nails.

"— unto ever —"

He fancied he could hear the straining of excited necks among such of the congregation as had not come forward. Of those who had he could see the eyes turn vainly toward her and sweep back to him. Himself, he was stumbling among the familiar phraseology:

"— everlasting life."

The daring of this!

When all town knew of Dinwiddie's refusal!

And he — John — What to do?

Anger flushed him as he passed on, delivering the bread into the hands opened before him. These glances were raised, asking him mutely what he would do, whereas, at all other such times, they had been lowered.

"Take and eat this in — "

Anger. Was she trying to force his hand? Trying again to bribe him — this time by a hint of letting him off — this time, moreover, into admitting her to communion? Hadn't Alice once said something or other about that sort of thing in this sort of connection? Well, he wouldn't be browbeaten — couldn't be bribed.

" — remembrance that Christ died for thee — "

Her wide influence in the diocese. — Her power with its Bishop. — Dinwiddie's plight.

Felton passed along the altar-rail. His articulation was smooth now — tone steady. Step steady, also. But every step brought him nearer Celeste.

" — and feed on him in thy heart — "

The Litchfields in St. John's would mean so much for the parish. Oughtn't the parish's welfare weigh more than a technicality?

" — by faith, with thanksgiving."

Nearer!

Alice had spoken in a moment of girlish enthusiasm — and now Alice had to be defended from a wound through her brother. By a right means only, of course: it wasn't merely Celeste that demanded consideration. The mill-workers: they would soon be without an Episcopal church unless they came here, and they would certainly not come here if their employer were sent away. "To turn them from darkness to light." Dinwiddie's decision wasn't binding on any other clergyman. Moreover, it was the decision of a man liable, when it was made, to deposition from that office proper qualifications for which alone empowered him to make it.

She looked devout.

"The Body of our Lord — "

But it was only a memorial, no matter what the words

he had just been forced by rule to utter might seem to imply.

" — given for thee — "

To save Alice by placating Celeste, when placating Celeste was not wrong! Celeste wasn't a divorced woman remarried: she was merely a woman married to a divorced man. Everybody that knew the world knew the frequent necessity of divorce, anyhow — and the benefit of remarriage. Hundreds of Episcopal ministers acknowledged it; more would, if they dared. In the last analysis, these matters were practically left to the discretion of the parish-rector concerned, after inquiry. Then, if there wasn't time for inquiry, one's general knowledge of the person should serve, and Felton knew this to be a woman of lavish charity, erring solely through an impulsiveness that could be directed into good channels. If he wasn't her parish-rector — well, with the sure fall of St. Alban's he soon would be.

" — preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life — "

She was the next in the line.

What would people say? What matter what they said, if he had her energy and her fortune in his church, and the Bishop back of them? What matter, if he firmly believed himself in the right? Kindliness — he had just said so, in his sermon — was what the world needed. Tolerance — sympathy.

He stood before Celeste. She raised black eyes to him, big and sad. Her face was an appeal.

Her red lips moved. He bent to hear her. What if Irma Olin, whom he had just communicated with the bread, bent her head also? Celeste was saying:

" Courtie . . . the innocent party in his divorce."

" Dinwiddie? " Felton whispered.

" His own fault. But I'm going to pension him."

In her pink palm, John placed the morsel:

" — Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving."

§ 2

The choir always sang the recessional hymn's last stanza in the vestry, the door of which had been closed to give a false sense of distance and was then opened while John pronounced the final sentences of his services — audible to his little congregation in the body of the church only as a sort of languid drone. Those sentences finished, the door was shut again, and the singers passed out through another, to disrobe in their own quarters. Thus today.

The rector, however, was not as usual. The vestry, its walls in pale gray distemper, was a bright room adorned with framed photographs of many of St. John's rectors. It had a closet in which the vestments were kept, and a huge chest of narrow drawers where the members of the Altar Guild laid the altar-cloths. Some forgotten incumbent had placed a Cross, of brown walnut, on the wall above the chest, and between chest and closet, in the centre of the chamber, stood the long oaken table around which the council of St. John's met once a month. On this table stood a telephone. Even before taking off his surplice, Felton consulted the telephone:

Dinwiddie would be at home. His Mass was briefer than John's combination of Morning Prayer with communion-service. . . .

Dinwiddie was home. Somehow, however, he sounded very strange.

" Yes — yes? "

Strange? But of course: the Bishop had been at home last night — likely warned him what to expect. Still —

" This is Felton. I've news for you. It's about Mrs.

Litchfield. She has just told me — But you know what the Bishop's going to do, of course? "

"I do not know." Very strange: tired out!

"Well, then, he's —" He must warn him: "He's going to unfrock you, Doctor —"

"Unfrock —"

"Yes. I thought you knew. I suppose he's going to dig up —"

The telephone clicked.

"Hello — hello — *hello!*" cried John. He rattled at the hook. "Central, you've cut us off."

Central said sweetly over the wire: "The other party hung up. Shall I ring again? "

She did ring. John heard her. But he soon heard something else.

"The other party doesn't answer," said Central.

"I jes' thought I'd dr-rap in an' pass ye the time o' day, Meester Felton," said Cameron.

He had entered by the choir-door.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

§ 1

MECHANICALLY, John replaced the receiver. Something graver than Grigg indicated had gone wrong with this ex-parson.

Puzzling —

A little seedy, he showed himself. Grease stained his derby hat at its band; his lawn tie, sole relic of clerical apparel in view, needed soap and water. Yet these were mere outward signs: the man must be poor, but he wasn't starving.

" I'm glad to see you," said Felton.

The sight startled and pained him. Three or four pimples dotted Cameron's sallow cheeks; he emitted a faint aroma of moonshine. Slowly declining health, perhaps; perhaps slowly mounting alcoholism: but still not a sick creature or a drunkard.

" Sit down," John urged — " do."

" Are ye, noo — glad to see me? "

Cameron had slumped loose-jointedly into a corner-chair and, to put his question, raised both face and voice; the latter confirmed the former, revealed now by a trembling ray of sunlight. His once smouldering eyes held mockery; his lips, on the contrary, drooped with submission; his tone was a bitter mixture of discouragement with anger against the world that caused it. A slackening grip on life, a tightening hatred of man: this was what was happening to Beza Cameron.

" Of course I am glad to see you."

Silence.

It had to be broken.

"I hear you have left Mr. Grigg," said Felton, leaning against the vestry-table.

"Fir-red," said Cameron.

"I'm sorry. I tried to have you reinstated."

"Thank ye kindly: I'm no wantin' reinstatement!"

"Well, we'll fix you up somewhere, somehow." Success would be hard, but must be attempted.

The corners of Cameron's mouth turned farther downwards:

"Meester Felton" — with misfortune had passed that use of John's surname which Felton had once demanded of the Scot — "naebody wants an ex-meenister. Themselves, they may think as low o' the chur-rch as they've a mind to; but they think lower o' him for leavin' it."

Just what Grigg had said! True, too. John, touched, replied:

"If you'd only stayed in!"

"Man, how could I?" A deep vertical line cut its way between the Scotch brows — then vanished as the lips sneered. "I'm no like Herman Embick, over here t'Trinity Reformed: he's stickin' by explainin' ever-thing to himsel' as a symbol — I can see that in his face. An' I'm no like that Luther-ran, Katz, who's tryin' t'mak' a business concern o' his chur-rch, because he's afraid to ask his own hear-rt ony questions about his faith. I'm not like even Catholic Father Barry: ye maun tell by his high-and-mighty bearin' wi' his own people how he's teachin' them somethin' he don't believe, because he thinks it gude for them onyhow."

Felton pulled his surplice over his head and elaborately replaced it in the lavender-scented closet. He donned his clerical coat slowly:

"You mustn't talk like that."

"It's the truth," said Cameron sullenly, "and did ye open

your eyes ye'd speer it. Here's Ivins wi' travelogues in his chur-rch, and Weir has a radio, and the new Presbyterian, my esteemed successor will soon have both thegither — but which out o' them has the Gawspel as his parteecular sect was formed to preach it? I spare some respect for daft Dinwiddie — but his daughter will soon bring him and his opeenions to shame."

John tried tolerance and his old smile. "How about me?"

"Oh, ye've got Judge Sherwood Averell, and he's got Al Bumpus, and Al has all the votes in the Fifth Ward. Man, now Bumpus has opened a bawdy-house in connection wi' his speak-easy."

"I won't hear this sort of talk!" Felton refused to credit it — wouldn't think about it. Should he order the fellow out? But he couldn't: he was too sorry for Cameron's plight. It must be only Cameron's plight, and not Cameron, that spoke thus untruly and bitterly. Cure his economic condition and you would cure him. Yes, something must be done for him.

What?

Since that proved hard to answer, John could issue a preliminary injunction scarcely less arduous to frame, yet at least definitely practical as a first step toward the desired rehabilitation:

"If you'll cut out liquor, we may get you something to do as good as Mr. Grigg gave you."

Cameron laughed through lantern jaws. "Never mind exactly that, sir. The wife's a forelady in the Americus silk-mill — she had her tur-rn at the loom when a lass in Glasgow — and the oldest boy's got a job on the *Star-and-Post*, and Jeanie's goin't' be a school-meestress in a month noo. Between they two and the wife, the ither chil'er'll be taken some sort o' care of."

"But you yourself and your self-respect? A man has to work."

"Does he? — When the wor-rld sniffs suspicion at him wher-rever he goes? It may be, though! It was to gi'e that vera idea the benefit o' the doot that I'm come to see ye. Me star-rtin' business-rounds on the Sabbath Day!" Cameron laughed again. "These mony year' I've known how to typewrite, and Jeanie owns a machine. I was wonderin' could ye per-rhaps get me a bit o' regular typewr-ritin' to do as a starter? I could do it wi'out offendin' delicate sensibilities by too close contact, and letters or legal-papers may be things folks can trust even an ex-meenister wi'."

"It's too bad," began John warmly, "when your reason for leaving the ministry was just the sort of reason that ought to make people trust you — "

"Spilled milk, sir. Reason's no' the str-rong point o' the people o' Doncaster, or onywhere else I ken."

The picture came to Felton of this big man bent over a typewriter, his long fingers striking the keys — And for what? To save his self-respect? Not enough in it for that. To buy his whiskey? Scarcely enough for that, either. Nor any kindness in providing the means. But once before John had failed Cameron. Had the Episcopalian only been a little more persuasive, perhaps — One mustn't fail Cameron now. The smallest start might lead to something —

"I'll see Judge Averell: there must often be more copying in his law-office than his stenographer can do. I'll see Hornaday. And — look here — if you'll type my sermons for awhile — "

He didn't need his sermons typed. He couldn't afford it. But he couldn't afford not to have Cameron type them.

Cameron rose to his great height. His stiff lips parted in a grin. "Thank ye again, Meester Felton. I'll be richt glad to do them for ye. Have I no the expeerience wi' the best

for-rm for typescript to be read in the pulpit! Ha-ha, sir! Seein' it's you, I'll even do it at a grand reduction — though that ye mustna tell my ither customers."

"I'll pay the regular price," said John shortly.

"Ah weel." Cameron wagged his head as one augur to another. "But ye won't expect me to believe what I type for ye — ay?"

Time to get rid of the man. "I don't preach on election or predestination."

"Nor hold by them?" leered Cameron.

"That's no affair of yours," said Felton, his patience overstrained.

He had scarcely thought of those obscure doctrines since the night when he discussed them with the man here again before him, but John knew that he didn't believe them, and never really had. What was the use of good works if your eternal future was determined aside from them? There existed some sort of Episcopal way to meet the dilemma; he had long ago forgotten it and no longer considered it worth while remembering. Who else cared? Time marched forward; the church must march with it, looking for an ever developing and broadening revelation of common-sense.

The vestry-room was full of sunlight now — sunlight in which the motes danced gaily. It bathed that walnut Cross against the wall, above the chest where the altar-cloths were kept; it did not leave a corner for the shades of Elizabethan theology.

Said Cameron:

"Weel, I've got even far-rther than when we had that talk o' ours, Meester Felton — considerable far-rther. Once a believin' man begins to doot, doot grows amazin'. It's unco more than election and predestination that I'm no swallowin' the noo. And I'll wager you're no preachin' on miracles — ay? Nor Beeblical inspiration? Ah, we Prot-

estants weren't vera far-seein' when we replaced an almost infallible man wi' an althegither book: a man's an elusive soul, but a book's all solid print — it can't juke detection. Man, I ken all your sermons from today's: ye gi'e your folk money-appeals and ethics."

Did one of Cameron's eyes wink?

"This is no place," said John, "for such discussions."

He went out to the waiting Litchfield car.

§ 2

Celeste was mixing the cocktails in her brown-and-gold parlor when Felton walked in. Her husband, wearing white flannels, smiled a greeting under his waxed moustache.

"Just in time," he said.

"Having given Mrs. Litchfield a chance to change her dress," John smiled.

She, too, wore white and so had never looked more duskily oriental. "You're really late," said she.

"I had a caller at the vestry," Felton explained and did not recollect his similar excuse made one evening at a certain very different house, on Henrietta Street.

"I'll forgive you." Celeste's jeweled fingers handed him a thin-stemmed, frosty glass. "Drink this. We're not Prohibitionists in this house, you know. Anybody that has to deal with labor, the way I do, knows they've got to be protected from drink, but the rest of us needn't suffer."

No mention, yet, of what she had done at St. John's. But something pressed more heavily upon Felton: he was glad to have the cocktail before Dora's plight arose for consideration. Courtie sipped; Celeste's glass was emptied by two drinks.

"I needed that." From putting down the glass on a Chippendale table, she turned back to John. Her somewhat flat-

tish features were clouded by a deep dejection. "Something's happened. Mr. Felton, I've just told Courtie about that Zalokostas girl — and she lied to me!"

John's glass rattled against his teeth. "Lied?"

"Not that." Courtie's green eyes narrowed. "The truth, but not the whole truth. Don't pretend to be wise to you preachers' job, but, in the law, I never did know a person to confess everything. Always keep somethin' back, and that somethin's always the thing you've got to pipe in order to understand the case."

"Tom Averell's not guilty?" Felton believed he required a second cocktail as badly as Celeste had owned to needing her first. If Tom wasn't guilty —

"Oh, Tom's guilty, all right. He's a sketch. But there's no evidence to show he's guilty of this baby. I mean, he's not the only man."

"After all I've done for her!" Celeste's well-developed breasts rose and fell visibly under her white gown. "After all I'd done for her, she sat in this room last night and let on she knew it was Tom! And an Episcopalian, too! I will say this for the Catholics: they keep their girls straight. Of course, she picked him because his father's Judge Averell —"

"She may be right when she says that, hon'. Point is she can't prove it. Can't lag Tom: other possibilities. All he'd have to do'd be subpoena 'em as witnesses against her character, Mr. Felton. We couldn't win by Ritzing. She hasn't got a case."

"I've this minute finished telling her so, over the 'phone," said Celeste.

"And sent her a check for a thousand, by messenger," Courtie supplemented. "The wife never fails."

"I had to do that! And you suggested it, anyhow. But I could tell, the way she talked then, it wasn't Tom. I know

it wasn't Tom. And I told her, after how she'd lied to me, I never wanted to see her again. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Felton? "

No word of apology for the anxiety she had caused him! That was like Celeste, as he had begun to know her.

But, though accompanying dismissal, a thousand dollars! That was like Celeste, too.

John's sleepless night — his agony of indecision: somehow, she could expel such events from one's memory. There were other men in the Greek girl's life — Tom probably not the father — no need, after all, to tell the Judge — and that girl, for the present, was handsomely provided for!

Felton heaved a vast sigh of relief:

" Yes. — I agree with you."

" When I think of her putting it over on me like that — "

" Oh, forget it! " said Courtie. " Let's have another li'l' drink: another li'l' drink won't do us a bit of good."

§ 3

Luncheon was served in the bright breakfast-room. Caviar. Filet mignon and sweet-potatoes imperial. A simple salad. Some of the old Raymond Hospice de Beaune with the food. With the coffee, on the upper terrace, overlooking the river and under a huge red-and-white garden-umbrella, a veritable 1860 brandy.

The relief . . .

Courtie was patting his sleek hair:

" Hope the Bish' won't mind what you did for my wife this morning, Felton. Communion, I mean."

Was he ironic? Impossible to tell.

" Certainly the Bishop won't! " flashed Celeste.

Felton was as sure as she was in his heart, and, if the Bishop didn't, Alice couldn't — and of course she'd long ago

forgotten that impulsive speech of hers. Still, since this delicate matter had at last been introduced, from his head he argued. If Dinwiddie ought to have consulted his superior before refusal, shouldn't John have been wise to effect such a consultation before acquiescence?

"The whole theory of episcopal authority's built on another theory: the theory — you know, Mrs. Litchfield — of an unbroken Apostolic Succession. I used to think we could prove ours; later, I doubted if we could; now I don't think it's very important one way or the other."

Courtie dropped the butt of his Egyptian cigarette — rolled, most likely, by Coptic Christians — into the lees of his coffee, where it hissed and smoked, and expired. "Still," said he, with his green eyes lowered and the crowsfeet at the eye-corners twitching:

> "'God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform.'"

"Courtie," Celeste said, "don't be blasphemous. Shut up. All I know, Mr. Felton, is that I've been confirmed and have a right to Communion as long as I'm sorry for my sins. And if ever I needed Holy Communion, it was today."

§ 4

That night fell cooler. A light breeze came down from the mountains too far off to be seen by day, and the darkness was like velvet.

John felt, on the whole, encouraged. He felt so much encouraged that he really had not been perfunctory at Evening Prayer. He was very tired, but astonishingly not sleepy. He went to his study and, having flung up the window that looked out on the churchyard, seated himself at his desk.

He ought to write to Alice.

He might write and explain, just in passing, the morning's communion-incident. That is, explain how he had been theologically — or anyhow sensibly — right.

He would.

Perhaps.

He sat there thinking that perhaps he would write to her.

Then — it might have been an hour later — some slight noise dragged his brown eyes to the window. He started.

The lamplight struck full on the face of Dora's father, who was standing outside among the graves. The coarse gray hair, the drooping moustache: these were uncomfortably familiar. But the skin over the high cheek-bones was flushed, and, out of their caverns, under the shaggy brows, the eyes of Nicephorus Zalokostas veritably flamed.

§ 5

John got himself at once in hand. "Hello," he said.

The Greek didn't answer.

"Well," said the rector, "I hope you found Dora."

"Yes." That monosyllable boomed in through the open window-space as mournfully as if it had been a negative.

Probably Felton would have to administer what comfort was possible, but as yet he owed it to Celeste not to admit too much knowledge. "And everything's all right?"

"Everyt'ing's all wrong."

"Wrong?"

"You know it. You was at Mrs. Litchfield's t'is mornin'. I seen you come away in one of her *autokineta*."

"And do the Litchfield's know anything?"

"I talked again to my daughter. You say you're not priest, Min-*ist*er Felton — you bet you ain't! You sneak

a poor Ort'odox kurl in your church and t'en you back up t'e rich fel' in your church t'at's ruined her! "

John got up. He took two bold paces toward the window. He forgot his duty to Celeste.

" Mr. Zalokostas, of course you are excited, and of course I'm going to do anything I can for Dora. Mrs. Litchfield has done a lot already. We'll come to that in a minute. But, first of all, I have to tell you — and I don't want to, but I have to — that there isn't any case against — "

Nicephoros wouldn't hear him:

" For Menodora? Do what you kin for my Menodora? You can't do not'ing. Nobody kin. She's gone again. And t'is time she's left a note, and it says she's gone for good. My little white, laughing lamb! " His voice choked, then, with renewed vigor, he burst out: " You know what t'at means — ' gone for good.' T'at means she's gone for bad! "

Before Felton could get breath, Zalokostas was gone also.

§ 6

John slept heavily and rose late: it was the ministers' Blue Monday, the world over. He always slept late on Monday mornings, and Sally knew it. But today the breakfast was already on table. For a moment, he feared that she might be going to scold about Celeste's communion — or say that the town was scolding.

" Good morning. Have you heard about Dinwiddie? " she cried. An event had befallen more exciting than that matter of Celeste, and Sally couldn't wait any longer to communicate the bad news. " Have you heard about Dr. Dinwiddie? He's dead."

Felton let the letters fall from his hand:

" Dead? "

" Yes. I heard it to market — and it's true enough: the

Prestons' girl tol' me, and they live next door. That daughter of his found him. She'd been out all night, and when she come in, she found him. In bed. The gas was all turned on. They're sayin' he'd bumped again' it by accident in the dark; but the windows was closed too, and I heard Bishop Meeker was after him, and you know what he is. They kin say what they like: I'll bet Dinwiddie done it himself."

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BOOK FOUR: Celeste

BOOK FOUR: Celeste

CHAPTER TWENTY

§ 1

THE green-shaded study-lamp burned late. John's pen formed each word more slowly than that preceding it:

". . . importance of Conduct. No matter what one or other of us now thinks about Heaven or Hell — and of course some Western conceptions of Everlasting Bliss and Eternal Punishment have undergone certain recent modifications — it would never have been the highest form of right to do right solely because we wanted reward and feared chastisement. The highest form of right-doing is the right-doing through love of right-doing *per se:* that is love of God. Nevertheless, fair play forces the admission that to do right from any motive is preferable to all wrong, and so good works remain the standard whereby we must test our — "

He couldn't go on with the writing of this sermon.

Couldn't!

Think of it! — Not counting feast-days, and not allowing for vacations, he had written, Cameron-typed and Felton-delivered, two hundred and eight such from the week in which Dinwiddie died. No repetitions, either — too risky — at least not in words: ideas were another matter.

Two years.

Two years of hard parish work. That only just kept St. John's afloat above the tide of Meeker's ever more and more exacting criticism. "Dignified and helpful!" It brought a

mere handful of people — the well-to-do of a Sunday morning, the poorer sort for Evening Prayer — into the pews, to misunderstand and try to look polite, or to misunderstand and doze, while the preacher forced himself through it and courteously, on his part, pretended that his congregation deceived him. "Solid!" Well, that had been the right word for this parish!

Now things were worse than ever. And the aging Bishop more exigent.

That is if they could be worse.

(A queer two years!)

He had lost Alice. . . .

§ 2

Still in this top drawer of his desk lay the note she had sent him. Note? No more than her card with its "Sherwood Averell" (she'd assumed early her father's middle name) crossed out and only its "Alice" left, above which was hastily written:

"I am bewildered — sorry — hurt. And of course I can't ever see you again."

So of course he took the first train and went to her and made her see him. In that mountain-hotel where she was abed.

§ 3

Adoring girl-friends had got it up like a room in a hospital, her room there, and then filled it with wild flowers from the neighboring hillsides and hothouse flowers from the city. The place was redolent of the scents of them, although all the windows were open.

Windows open. Scents came in from them, too: scents and sights. The pungent scent of white pine and hemlock

when the sun is hot — a broad view of the younger Appalachian ridges, dark green and *en dos de mouton*, under an unclouded sky which hung, almost motionless, one lazy turkey-buzzard.

He hadn't telegraphed ahead, or even — arrived — sent up any word. Just went up, after inquiring the number, and knocked and opened the door. . . .

Against those white pillows, her blue-black hair was outspread. The days indoors hadn't appreciably lessened the pink of her olive cheeks, but somehow her gray-blue eyes looked larger, and larger their pupils.

"You?" She lifted herself on an elbow.

Only then Felton noticed that there was somebody else in the room. Some sort of peaches-and-cream girl. Doubtless the girl whose guest Alice was when the accident happened: he couldn't remember her name. She rose from a chair beside the bed, a book in one hand.

John bowed. He said to her:

"You'll leave me alone with Miss Averell, please."

The strange girl looked at Alice.

"It's Mr. Felton," Alice explained: "the rector of our church at home. I didn't want — "

"Oh," the strange girl interrupted. "Your priest?"

"No!" — That was John. — "Her rector." Anyhow, Alice hadn't told her: Alice wouldn't. "But I must see Miss Averell alone."

"I don't want — " began Alice.

"Alone," Felton repeated.

There was an instant of silent combat. Did John win it? Just at its end he thought he had won it; later, he doubted. However, Alice said:

"Perhaps he'd better have his own way about this, Flo. Come back in ten minutes. I'll ring."

§ 4

Ten minutes was all the time he had with Alice — the shortest ten minutes of his life.

He remembered how she used to greet him, both large, fine hands extended. She gave him but one now, and that in the ordinary way, quickly withdrawn. And as she sank back, she let him stand.

It turned his resolution to the ebb. He had left home in a high frenzy — composed, on the train, plausible arguments, persuasive speeches: gone! He tugged at his clerical collar:

"You're getting on all right? I suppose your people have written all the Doncaster news? Poor Dr. Dinwiddie — "

She had always possessed a directness equal to Celeste's although so different:

"I've heard about Dr. Dinwiddie: what the Bishop was going to do to him and what some horrid people say he did to himself. — You came because I sent you that card? "

"Yes."

"You shouldn't have."

"I had to."

"Of course you knew what it was about? "

Of course he did — had known from its receipt. As soon as he read it, he saw Celeste, in black, kneeling at St. John's altar-rail. He saw her again, here. Of old, in Alice's presence everything used to seem so secure — but Celeste, with whom he was never sure of anything, was clearly present in this flowered room.

No man ever did any one thing from any one reason, but the commanding reason at behest of which John had administered communion to Celeste was — oh, he'd admitted it days since! — to placate her and so protect Alice by

somehow rescuing Tom. Felton believed he was right — believed he had sound theological reasons for his action — but he didn't blink, any more, that motive. Nor was he ashamed of it. Only, to tell Alice would be to inflict on her almost the same wound to save her from which had been his motive at the start. Tom wasn't the father of a bastard, but the original charge had foundation in the young fellow's illicit relations with Dora, and, if John tried to conceal those, Alice, he knew, would prove too clear sighted for him: people didn't make allegations without some basis. No, he couldn't tell her.

"You mean somebody's told you that Mrs. Litchfield — "

"That you gave her Communion."

"That's right: I did. But, Alice — "

"Dr. Dinwiddie didn't."

"He had a right to his opinion, and I have a right to mine. I can explain. He's — he was a High Churchman, you know, and you know I'm not. You're not."

"I didn't agree with him in most things; but this hadn't anything to do with them. I told you so — once."

"I know: that night at your father's when we talked about the possibility — the night you came home from the south — but right here I said — Why, that night I thought you were just enthusiastic for the brave course. It never occurred to me that you'd go so far — "

"You mean you thought I'd surrender to expediency — if I had to." Her wide eyes regarded him steadily. "Dr. Dinwiddie was brave, there at St. Alban's: are you sure, at St. John's, you weren't something else? "

"Certainly, I'm sure! " — He was. — "I said that night that in practice such matters were left to the discretion of the rector of the person's parish."

"Had Celeste joined St. John's? "

"She'd left St. Alban's."

"You don't really think that's the same thing," said Alice quietly.

"I was within my rights. The Bishop knows what I did — or, anyhow, he ought to by this time — and he hasn't objected."

"Oh — the Bishop!"

So she wouldn't accept the episcopal attitude, after all! "Alice" — Felton had been standing as close to her bedside as he dared. He drew back a step. "If the rector is convinced, after proper inquiry — "

"You made that?"

"I don't know who's been turning you against me!"

"Nobody, unless it's yourself. All the news I got was just the bare fact." A flicker of hope passed over her face; her fingers toyed with the sheet; but she looked at him with the same steadfast eyes. "I'm not asking you to tell me anything you oughtn't to tell. But did you make what you call proper inquiry — "

He wouldn't lie. No, under that candid gaze, he couldn't:

"There wasn't a chance. She didn't give me any warning."

That hope died. "She probably didn't give Dr. Dinwiddie any, either. Only Dinwiddie was the kind that doesn't need warnings."

The taunt stung. Felton's reaction was instantaneous:

"And Dinwiddie was going to be unfrocked — and he is dead."

It was an involuntary self-betrayal. The girl raised her body on her elbow again. Not so much distaste as a deep regret leaped from her. He had done it, this time! "So that was the way you felt about it!"

"No, no!" It hadn't been — he was sure it hadn't been! As he saw Alice's mouth harden, John's brown eyes began to fill with despair. "Celeste did say to me that her husband

was the innocent party in his suit." Felton's voice shook. "Honestly! And she wasn't a divorced person remarried: she was only a woman married to a divorced man."

"*That?*" He was too late. Her charge had stripped him of a certain disguise. Unconscious of ever having borne it, he did not know that it went; but she saw it go. Until now, he nevertheless understood, she had been moved in her new course toward him by what she probably thought was sudden intuition, sprung from word of a single action on his part, but what was in fact the result of long thought about him during tired days and restless nights, confined in this room. Now — "You call that reason! I don't know what the Church's rules are for such cases, — and I don't care. I do know — I can tell — with you this is just nothing except a getting-around of trouble."

Where was her humor? Where that habit of generosity acquired in her Carolinian work? "Alice — "

"That's what I was so terribly afraid of when I wrote. It was why I wrote, and why I hoped, down in my heart, you'd come here, no matter what I wrote, so I could see." Her voice became infinitely tired, yet remained fatally firm. "Well, now I wish you hadn't come — now you've made me sure: forever."

"If you think I've any feeling for Mrs. Litchfield other than — "

"I don't care. Can't you understand that? No, I don't think so, of course. But I wouldn't care if you had."

"Then if you think I was afraid — But I wasn't afraid: I was wise — "

Her eyes closed for a second, wearily: "I know you were afraid."

"That's not true, Alice," He felt it wasn't true, as she intended her statement. Perhaps he had been afraid of —

"You were afraid of Celeste — or you were just afraid of taking on any more trouble — or you were afraid of — "

To be sure, he had been afraid of losing Alice through having to demand of her father restitution from her brother for that brother's wrong. But her love for Tom made it entirely impossible for him to tell her that. He guessed he was mistaken: that she would have stood by him, after all. But he simply couldn't tell her. Besides, he now quite convinced himself that he had not let this fear influence him. He had acted as he did to save her from hurt, not to save her for himself: well, from that hurt he must still save her, at cost of any others.

"Even if I was — I wasn't, but even if I was — " He had always thought it woman's particular province to forgive; in spite of his parish work, he had no practical comprehension of the modern woman in the world. "I wasn't, but even if I was, why couldn't you forgive me? "

"Forgive you — me? "

"Yes. You forgave Tom when he came home a little — "

She pushed back her blue-black hair. "How can you think of his being drunk as like your giving Communion to Celeste Raymond? I'm not the One to forgive that. And if you are safe about it only on some technicality or other, why, all the more, John, that makes everything over between us. Over." — She was terribly calm. If she would cry — He hated to have a woman cry, but he'd rather have Alice cry than say, with that uncombatable calmness: "Over, John. I really don't care."

There was an electric-bell button beside her bedhead. She reached for it to summon that friend of hers.

"Don't ring," he pleaded.

Alice rang.

He pleaded: "Alice; if you'll only let me tell you how

I feel toward you! If you'll only let me make you see that that's the important thing! "

His round, brown face was eloquent. It seemed, however, that his words were the very antonyms of any she required.

" *That* the important thing! " She rang again. Violently this time as if to end something — or hide something. " The important thing is I don't believe in you any more."

He fell back. He looked away. The other girl mustn't see what his face revealed.

" When do you come back to Doncaster — "

" I'm not coming back to Doncaster."

Should he have seized, then and there, the power from her hands and, using it, have used, at the same time, piteously, the affection she had borne him? The key was on the inside of the door: he could have turned the lock — prostrated himself before her as at their last meeting he had wanted to prostrate himself — begged her mercy — recalled what they had said on the lawn of her father's house about all that the right kind of love can do for a man. During these past two years he had often wished sorely that he had done these things — and as often assured himself of their essential futility with such a woman as Alice proved to be. But not the least reason why he did not do them was that he had completely convinced himself of his innocence.

Nor could he have spoken. He had always said he wasn't good enough for her; now he knew it. She was grievously mistaken about the Litchfield case: therein he was a martyr; but Alice was too good for him. She breathed too rarified an air; even if he convinced her on this occasion, he could never live up to the severe standards of such a wife. He loved her, and the old impulse to justify his deeds for his own sake struggled strongly; but that realization of her essential aloofness inhibited him. When he

got outside in the hall he would bring to mind his precise arguments, his golden persuasions: in here, words darted beyond reach as if he, the once glib leader of a seminary's debating-club, were trying to extemporize a sermon at St. John's. He used always to feel young with her; at this crisis he felt only how young she was and how very old was he.

"I'm so sorry, but you see I don't believe in you any more."

§ 5

Flo came in — whoever Flo was.

Finality. . . .

She — Alice — shook hands with him.

His last sight of her was of her on the bed there, her blue-black hair outspread, the pink unheightened in the oval of her olive face, the large eyes calm, almost surprised; her lips smiling pleasantly to Flo, while, beyond the open window behind her was framed a living picture of the rolling, dark-green Alleghenies.

§ 6

Alice kept her word.

She hadn't come back to Doncaster. She'd gone to Europe. Mrs. Averell said that her nest was empty again; other people put it in another way — said Tom was working in another town because the Judge could and did stop his marriage to Justine — that Alice was performing prodigies in some Balkan refugee-children's camp of the Near East Relief.

She had said she didn't believe in John. What did she mean?

The gift of easy speech had not yet come back to Felton: his letters to Alice were poor ones, and he thoroughly ap-

preciated their inadequacy. She wouldn't answer — she didn't. Soon, he stopped writing them.

She breathed too rarified an air.

§ 7

A queer two years.

If, at their start, Dinwiddie only hadn't too precipitately hung up the 'phone and cut Felton short on receipt of that news of Meeker's sinister intention — or if Cameron hadn't had to enter St. John's vestry-room just then, in need of work — unhappy old Father Brethwald would have learned Celeste's plan to pension him. Perhaps, then, the event would never have happened that led to Felton's self-betrayal before Alice —

No, that wasn't the way to think of it. He put it from him:

Perhaps Dinwiddie would not now be dead and forgotten. John blamed himself for not persisting in that telephone-call.

But how could he know that he was dealing with sudden madness? Dinwiddie was mad, of course. What else could have driven to suicide him, who, as a High Churchman, must have considered the taking of his own life as the most cowardly and one of the worst of sins? However, Felton sometimes doubted whether, had the poor man lived, he would have accepted alms at Celeste's magenta finger-tips.

Justine had not. When the Litchfields went to her with the same offer, she dabbed her violet eyes and shook her rebellious yellow head and said something that they never quite comprehended:

" I wouldn't touch it if it was ten times that! Oh, I know you paid my boarding-school bills: I only wish you hadn't — I only wish I could pay you back! But then you talked about me: both of you. That was why he was on the porch! "

Courtie's tact somehow availed to get Celeste away before she tried to inquire into this.

"After all that I've done for that girl!" said his wife. But she had a mind above saying it to Justine.

Anyhow, the open scandal of a clerical suicide was evaded: everybody knew about it — everybody talked a great deal, many of them, such as dentist Colfax and Mr. Slocum, declaring that she had driven the priest to his end — but in public no compromising gossip circulated. The family doctor, people said, was a good fellow, even if he was a Catholic: he issued unhesitatingly a certificate of death from heart-failure. The *Star-and-Post* — all the papers — reported the event accordingly. Bishop Meeker insisted on a church-funeral as a matter-of-course, and himself came on — at considerable trial to his gout — for it; he presided; he preached a eulogistic sermon dwelling on the points of the dead cleric's character that all agreed were good points, and he heavily, but consistently, avoided subjects of controversy. John read the service.

§ 8

Dora hadn't been seen again.

At first, when Felton passed her father on the street, John would make kindly inquiries. Then it became impossible to overlook the rudeness of the Greek's sullen replies: after that, Felton fought shy of him. Nicephorus was Dora's legal guardian, and he refused help: single-handed, and thus stultified, her rector — not being her father's priest, or a priest at all, as Zalokostas reminded him — could do nothing.

There was entirely too much of this not-a-priest charge from a man who must be too ignorant to know what the charge meant anyhow. John knew. He knew he was not

a priest — had long frankly said so. Just when the knowledge came, he couldn't remember, nor did it matter: probably its revelation was affected by his disgust with the episcopacy as a method of church-government.

Ernest Grigg had put the thing concisely one day. With cocked head he inquired:

"I say, your Bishop's rather letting his High Church parsons down, isn't he? I see he's come out for this new idea of Christian Unity: each sect to accept ordinations from every other. Sort of 'You kiss me and I'll kiss you.' They're sure the truth's somewhere around, and they're going to get it, even though they can't recognize it when they have it. It won't work: you'll see! But what price Meeker as a direct spiritual descendent of St. Paul now?"

Felton recalled his own ordination: the warm sunlight — the candles — the strange congregation, expectant — the music — the solemnly moving ritual. He recalled how he had needed a sense of mystery — sought it — willed it — found it.

Well, somehow he'd lost it. Gradually he'd learned that it contained no reality.

Priest: a go-between betwixt God and man, a Mediator's mediator! In Christianity — he read this up in a book he found on Grigg's desk — the word was merely a contraction of "presbyter," and at first, the book said, the presbyters were called plain "elders." Because a candidate had received a laying on of hands from a Bishop, he could change bread and wine into the body and blood of the Deity! Felton didn't believe in that change, so where was the initial use of a priesthood? But, even if you did believe in it on such terms, how could you believe that the power to make it was conferred by a Bishop when you didn't believe in the Apostolic Succession?

"What price Meeker as a direct spiritual descendant of St. Paul?"

As for this Zalokostas business —

As if you couldn't keep secrets and give advice without being that sort of priest!

So John thereafter let Nicephorus Zalokostas alone.

§ 9

Felton's face was thinner: it gave him, people thought, a more spiritual look. He was always worried.

The country-club additions had proved to be almost the success their promoters had hoped for them: they were of small benefit to John. He was still regularly "behind" at each month's end: his salary was too low, and the cost of living had risen. On the debit side of his domestic ledger stood his ordinary expenses, his private charities, Cameron's wages, the payments on the Litchfield note; and in the credit-column there appeared a few funerals, less weddings and almost no christening at all.

In the churchyard, after a morning service, he encountered Hornaday, whose people were buried there and who seemed to find a stoic pleasure in contemplating the place reserved for his body among them: there were so few places left in St. John's churchyard; such reservation conferred distinction. John sounded his Junior Warden about a raise of salary: he would form the chief fortress of opposition.

"M'yes," said Hornaday.

"You mean you'll approve?" Felton couldn't keep the joy out of his tone.

"M'no."

The joy vanished. "But why?"

"Why d'you want it?"

"I have very heavy expenses."

"Cut 'em down," said the rich man, stroking his equine jaw and showing his long upper teeth. "I do," he added.

"I try to," declared Felton.

"M'yes." Hornaday looked swiftly at his rector, and as swiftly at the tomb in which his own parents were enshrined. "How much was it you gave the country-club?"

John felt discouraged. "That may have been a mistake; but the debt's discharged long ago."

"To the club, m'yes."

Was the knowledge of that "confidential" note broadcast? "Anyhow," Felton uncomfortably protested, "I've other claims on me — "

"Cameron's a turn-coat."

"An honest one — "

"And he's getting to be a drunkard."

"But I mean still other claims: real charities. I can't cut down my charities, Mr. Hornaday."

"Ain't the best kind of charity the kind that pinches you some when you give it? A preacher don't have to give much."

"Nobody ought to want to be considered stingy!" It irked John that this notoriously grudging giver should emit maxims on such a subject. — But it would be unwise to let him suffer the sting of a retort *ad hominem*. "No clergyman wants to be considered stingy; if he is, he'll lose his job."

Whether or not this addendum came too late Felton couldn't tell, for Hornaday's face was hidden as he regarded the tomb.

"M'well," said he, "the parish can't afford to raise your salary just now. You've been here right some time, and there ain't any more people in it that when you come. Time enough to talk more wages when you've got more congrega-

tion. — I wish you'd speak to Zeller: twenty-five year' ago I paid for perpetual care of this lot, and he's letting it git sloppy."

§ 10

The Celeste incident had blown over easily enough. There was talk, to be sure: Mr. Slocum cupped his ear, and Dr. Colfax poured the rumors into it; but even those adverse comments, which John didn't catch, would scarcely have hurt him had they reached him.

In the town at large there were, assuredly, some head-waggings. Felton was Cameron's chief client, and had provided for Cameron most of his other clients, but Cameron, to his cronies at Bumpus's place, grinned over that admission to Holy Communion:

" O' coorse, it wouldn'a hae mattered in the kirk wha' used to be mine, an' some o' Felton's kirks are fair free, but we mun' hae our porridge even if the pot is a wee bit sooty."

Grigg talked to Rosenbaum, who stood in front of his clothing store with his hands clasped behind him and a large cigar in his mouth:

" Amusin', isn't it? That chap'll come a theological cropper yet. You wait and see."

Ikey shook his head. " I wouldn't like to see dot. Still, when a fellow's playin' a game, even if it ain't my game, I like to see him play py de rules."

Father Barry said, but naturally only in safe quarters: " Compromise. What else would you be looking for in a sect that's based on compromise? "

No, as a whole, the town forgot this in the so swiftly following Dinwiddie demise. At St. John's, Bishop Meeker holding his peace from afar, Judge Averell and perhaps Hornaday, as practical people, saw advantageous possibilities in Celeste, regarding such matters as affairs of practice

rather than dogma; they were leaders, and the congregation, which had no vital interest fell in with them. Throughout Doncaster the sole serious disapproval was voiced, oddly enough, in the Ministerial Association, where all the members, save the one criticized, were at more or less canonical liberty to administer each his own Lord's Supper to any member of his flock, however often divorced, or however married. John was late, as usual, for the meeting next after Celeste's dramatic appearance at his church's altar-rail, and so, also as usual, those who waited talked about him.

" I'm told that Mr. Felton " — the Methodist pastor, the Rev. Owen Ivins, rubbed his sleek hands together — " that Brother Felton has received into fellowship the lady poor Dr. Dinwiddie refused."

Stewart — Cameron's successor — snorted. They were met in what he called the " manse-parlor ":

" It's not a question of Litchfield's divorce, from my point of view, of course; but I must say — " He had to say a great deal.

" Vell," said Embick, of the Reformed parish, " dere's no sound patristic argument against the act, only — "

Bustling Katz, the Lutheran, did try to brush it all away as " a demonstration of applied Christianity "; but Harry Weir, of Bethseda Baptist, shook his tawny locks:

" Felton always lights on his feet. The Raymond money — pretty soft! "

But Felton never heard this. When he came in, they were all glad to see him.

§ 11

And yet Hornaday, John had to admit, could claim some justice for his argument against the salary-raise. The rector was up with the dawn and worked hard well into the night; but the church didn't prosper. In fact, attendance

and income both fell off that first winter, and another mortgage was hardly negotiated with Grigg — his second on the property.

"There's too much money in the country," said Felton. "Whenever the country's too rich, the churches are poor."

Soprano and contralto threatened to disrupt St. John's choir; the Ladies Guild and St. Martha's all but came to blows — there was no Alice, John bitterly realized, to pacify them. Confirmation-classes were only just maintained; rumor said that Bishop Meeker was "failing": in impossible demands upon his clergy, he gained strength every day. Felton had hoped for reënforcements from St. Alban's, but he did not receive them — Celeste had gone abroad in mourning, because Courtie was dead and buried in Doncaster.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

§ 1

IT was murder.

It was the first out-and-out murder that the city had had in six years.

It was the only recorded one whereof the victim happened to be a really respectable person.

One evening, it seemed, about a fortnight after Felton's disastrous visit to the mountains ("Looking so well," said Valeria Neff: "I'm sure you've been studying that Bahist literature I lent you!") Courtlandt Litchfield had left home for some pressing work at his office. He never came back alive.

This office was situated on the ground floor of a former dwelling-house in lower James Street, now entirely occupied for professional purposes by legal practitioners, and, despite its proximity to the town's business section, the district became a lonely area after 10 P.M. The reception-room of Litchfield's suite had windows showing the thoroughfare, but too high to be seen into therefrom; it opened on a general hallway, and it was the duty of that patrolman who went on this beat at midnight to take a look, at each of his rounds, into the hall. The house boasted no resident janitor; the last tenant leaving nocturnally first assured himself that he was the last and then fastened the street-door behind him. If the building was dark and that door open, the officer would turn down the dead-latch.

Thus it befell in the present instance. The policeman saw a light from the Litchfield windows — their blinds were then

drawn — at 12:05 A.M. It was still there at 1:05. At 2:05 it was not; but the street-door was open. He dropped the latch, then perfunctorily turned his flash-light up and down the hall: the door of Litchfield's suite hung ajar.

The patrolman pushed it wide. Scarcely two yards beyond it, Courtie's body, clad in evening-clothes, lay supine on the floor. He was dead from a gaping knife-wound through the heart.

MYSTERIOUS MURDER OF WELL-KNOWN CITIZEN!

The *Star-and-Post*, normally an evening newspaper, issued an early extra:

> There were no signs of struggle — nothing, Litchfield's stenographer said, had been taken from the office — the widow (one pictured a grimly self-controlled Celeste) declared not any detail was missing from among such articles of value as her husband had had on his person; watch, pearl shirt-studs, waistcoat-buttons and cuff-links, all were intact — more than a hundred dollars of money remained in the pockets. The coroner's physician announced that death must have been instantaneous; that it had probably occurred a half hour before the body's discovery, and that the wound — there was but one — might have been inflicted by any sort of knife having a long, broad blade. City-Hall's finger-print expert, who was also Chief of Police, had searched vainly for traces on which to exercise his special knowledge. Already the grief-stricken Mrs. Litchfield had offered a $10,000. reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the guilty party.

Before its breakfast was eaten, Doncaster, as represented by nine-tenths of its population had forgotten the covert Dinwiddie scandal in face of this published mystery. What the *Star-and-Post* described as "the hue and cry" began. The local police did not hasten into high quarters, but they combed the lower. "Babe" Campbell, who headed the force in neighboring Americus, telephoned an intention to make every ne'er-do-well in that community account for his movements during the previous twelve hours; the constables of all nearby villages were equally vigilant. At half-past nine, a tramp was arrested — and released when it was shown that he had passed the night in the city lock-up. Then the investigators began to see that, since robbery was not the motive — unless, to be sure, robbery had somehow failed — suspicious characters shouldn't be suspected, and that, since there had been no struggle, although the blow was struck from in front, the murderer must have been known to his victim.

§ 2

Felton hurried to the house on the hill. Its shutters were bowed and a large frond of palm was suspended from the door-bell.

"I'll see if Mrs. Litchfield'll see you," said the red-eyed but still socially impressive maid, and, presently returning, conducted John down the hall, past the darkened parlor where Courtie's body waited, and into the smoking-room, almost as full of reminders of him.

Celeste sat there. She wore the black dress that she had worn when Felton admitted her to Communion, and his first emotion, as he now saw her, was one of satisfaction that he had not refused her. No sound of tears could be detected in her ever throaty voice, no tokens of them on her face, but it showed curiously white under that saffron powder which

habit bestowed upon it even at such a crisis; the eyes looked darker than ever, and the mouth set itself in a firm line.

"I expected you," she said; "but, just the same, it was good of you to come."

"I am so sorry about all this," said John.

The room was lighted, behind its shutters, by a simple reading-lamp on a tabouret standing beside a couch that was an upholstered invitation: doubtless Courtie used to throw his comfort-loving body there when he took his ease in this place — a silver box of cigarettes stood open close to the lamp. Celeste, however, sat upright in the least easy of the several easy-chairs:

"Yes — and I'm grateful for your sympathy. But I can't realize my loss yet. I loved him."

"Of course." Felton drew a chair toward her, not too close.

"So I want to be doing something," she went on. "I don't want to just sit still and grieve."

He might have known that hers would be no case for the conventional consolations. "Perhaps there's some clue in whatever business it was took Mr. — took your husband to his office last night. If any client had an appointment with him — "

"I thought of that right off. I asked the stenographer, and she didn't know. He didn't tell me, and I didn't think to ask him: it wasn't anything new. He often used to have to go there — not to see clients, but just to work up cases, when he had any — so when he began again, a couple of days back, I knew it was some such stuff. Poor Courtie wasn't such a digger at his work that I ever felt like asking him to stay home when he did want to go to his office."

"Had he any enemies? "

"That's what the fool police want to know. I told them he

hadn't an enemy in the world. He didn't have, either — except, some ways, sometimes himself."

"Then you've no idea —"

She had taken Dinwiddie's suicide — shocked by it and sorry for it though she was — as the culminating act of a madman whose mania had spent most of its violence, utterly without cause, against herself; but she couldn't help hearing a bit of what some other people said concerning her absurdly alleged responsibility, and she remembered the defiant attitude of Father Brethwald's daughter. The widow's black brows contracted:

"I'd like to know where Justine Dinwiddie was at half-past one this morning."

John fairly jumped in his chair. "Justine?"

"Well, there are lots of people who hate me, but she's the only one I can think of who might think she'd any reason to hate Courtie."

"That girl?" — That yellow-haired inconsequential rebel: it was incredible. "You said he hadn't an enemy in the —"

"I know — none that had any right to be. And I'm telling you she's the only one that I know of who could imagine she had."

"But why?"

"Her father."

Felton shared Celeste's attitude toward Justine's father. Celeste had been wickedly retaliatory, but she repented — and, anyhow, her parochial acts, violent of course, weren't enough to drive anybody really mad. "Her father was crazy. Anybody who commits suicide is."

Celeste clasped her hands in her lap. "She mightn't have thought so, and, anyhow, you don't know what he told her — and what she believed."

"About you, perhaps." This was a terrible situation! "He'd hardly include your husband."

"You just now called Dinwiddie crazy."

"I know. He was; his daughter isn't. And you'd always been so very kind and generous to her before — "

The widow's hands unlaced themselves. She tapped out her statement with an index-finger on a knee:

"When we wanted to give Justine that money — Courtie and I " — Celeste hesitated a sad instant, this time, at the mention of her dead husband's name; but her voice continued firm — "she was awfully queer and awfully mad. She said something about us being to blame. It was idiotic, of course; but she meant it, all right: she meant it for both of us. If her father was crazy, why, perhaps she is: I don't know much about their family-history — only, I do know she hated the two of us." Suddenly, Mrs. Litchfield rose, indicating that this interview was nearing its termination. "Oh, I haven't told the police — yet! — Mr. Felton, there are a couple of other things I want to talk to you about, but one of them — I want to put up a memorial-window to Courtie in St. John's — 'll keep. The other one is about the — " only the flicker of a pause — "the funeral. Of course, I want a church funeral. I can't stand these people who have house funerals: they only have them because they're cowards. After what Dr. Dinwiddie did to me and what I've seen of you, I don't believe all I used to believe — at least, not in the same way — but I do think that when a Churchman dies, he ought to be buried from a Church. And, you know, Courtie was brought up in our Church: he was confirmed while he was at St. Paul's School, and when I first knew him he used to take Communion in New York, every once in a while."

§ 3

The inquest was opened, but no new evidence produced:

The patrolman that found the body gave formal evidence thereof.

The coroner's physician, who performed the autopsy, testified in strict accord with what he had already said in the interview published by the *Star-and-Post.*

Celeste appeared, adding, however, nothing to the general knowledge.

Pretty Gladys Drumbaugh, Courtie's stenographer, proved that she had been dancing until all hours at the Garrison House on the night of the murder; she could throw no light upon its motive.

All the deceased's brief list of clients were in somewhat similar case.

The houses opposite the scene of the killing were entirely occupied as shops and stock-rooms: they had been empty after eight o'clock.

Nobody except Courtie was in an office at that office building on the evening in question, nor in any of the offices of the office buildings on either side adjoining.

The attendant police looked as wise and were as reticent as police always do and are when at sea: neither their appearance nor their silence impressed.

The inquest adjourned.

§ 4

Being in political opposition to the municipal administration, the *Star-and-Post* more than hinted at inefficiency on the part of the police. State-police and detectives were called in to help. Various men of suspicious mien were reported as having been observed with bloody hands in as many parts of

town and the surrounding country immediately after the murder, which such evidence as existed showed that they didn't commit: they were not found.

§ 5

"I know that my redeemer liveth," read Felton in his rich, magnetic voice, as he slowly preceded the coffin up the aisle of the church, "and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes behold, and not another."

St. John's was as full of flowers as Alice's room had been, up there in the Alleghenies.

"And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee. . . . Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, Thou art God —"

Celeste, her face hidden behind a heavy crèpe veil, in the front pew — sitting up straight. The Averells. All the regular congregation. Many, this time, from old St. Alban's and the mills — if only they'd come regularly! Grigg. Ikey Rosenbaum —

Felton read the appointed lesson from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, with its clarion-call of defiant faith:

"Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that sleep. . . . I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? . . ."

For an occasion of this sort, his voice abandoned nasality — retained all its splendid timbre. It rang like a church bell through the church:

"Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not sleep, but we

shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. . . .

"O death, where is thy sting?

"O grave, where is thy victory?"

§ 6

"You know well enough," said Celeste, when, on the evening of this day, John went to see that she was all right — "you knew well enough that these Doncaster police are afraid to question anybody who is anybody — or whose father was. Well, the State Police don't seem much better. I'm going to hire a couple of men from one of the big New York agencies. I can talk to them."

She made that downward sweep of her right arm with fingers extended.

§ 7

An election was approaching. The *Star-and-Post* frankly scarified both local and state police and detectives.

In due course, those private investigators summoned by Celeste came. Not so sure as death, although they at first pretended to be, they nevertheless resembled it in one particular: they were no respecters of persons. They "grilled," as they well called it, everybody. That they possessed no local legal authority therefore did not deter them. And their inquiries began by incontrovertibly establishing an alibi for Justine: she had been staying at the Prestons' since the inevitable dismantlement of St. Alban's rectory — at the Prestons' she passed all the night of the murder.

On the announcement of this, Celeste refused to believe it: she threatened to discharge her detectives. When they demonstrated the truth of their report, she sulked. Then she suf-

fered an acute attack of remorse for her baseless supposition. Then she renewed her proffer of financial assistance to Justine, which Father Brethwald's daughter again, but quietly this time, declined. And then Celeste was angry once more — especially so because convinced of Justine's innocence.

The continued work of the metropolitan men appeared unproductive. The adjourned inquest was held, and closed:

"We, the jury, find that the deceased came to his death by a knife-wound inflicted by some person or persons unknown."

§ 8

That was the beginning of the official end of the case. The district attorney's office and the coroner's office were jealous of each other; they quarrelled; they impeded each other. Jealous and quarrelling, the local detectives and the New York detectives placed every possible obstacle in one another's way. Cranks wrote letters; one transmitted an obviously false confession. The election came along and largely diverted interest. After that, even the *Star-and-Post* could not squeeze any more sensations out of the crime, or scrape any more political advantage by further criticism.

In a final flaming of their expiring zeal, the despised State Police found enough courage tactlessly to interrogate Celeste herself as to her movements between the hour of her husband's last departure from home and the discovery of his body. It went without saying that they would learn nothing to their task's advantage and that their absurdity would both shock Celeste and rouse her indignation. She was worn out by the long strain of her tragedy: after many refusals, she at last accepted, as her own, her physician's advice to go away for a rest and change of scene, of indefinite length — of not less than eighteen months. In Paris mourning, she left for Paris.

Many weeks later, when all other search had wearily subsided, the private detectives were withdrawn by cable. The mystery had derogated to the stage where it was no more than a handy stone on which to sharpen one's wits — an interesting topic for after-dinner speculation. Doncaster was itself again.

Meanwhile, the Courtlandt Litchfield memorial-window went up in St. John's — it is the rose-window in the south transept, a really good thing. And, meanwhile, too, Courtie Litchfield slept well.

A queer two years.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

§ 1

FOR Felton, a terrible two years.

He had thought that of course Celeste would be here to stand between him and the Bishop: she was no sooner gone than Meeker increased his annoying interferences twenty-fold.

Somewhere in the diocese, somebody said that he "was at last really showing his age." Somebody else started talk about the need for an assistant — a suffragan — a coadjutor. A third person whispered of retirement. All these things came, as everything always did, to the Bishop's still alert ears: he retaliated by increasing the vigor of his campaign for parochial efficiency — he would show these grumbling rectors that he was as young as ever — and his demonstration appeared to Felton to fall with especial asperity upon St. John's.

"*Ecclesia est in episcopo*" —

"The Episcopal Church would get along a lot better without its episcopacy," thought John.

There seemed no way to turn. Up at six every morning as heretofore, as heretofore to bed late each night, he was frightfully overworked — alone in his cares and responsibility — he could scoff at laymen for thinking a minister's job confined to pulpit-appearances — and yet he was overworked — and solitary — to no real purpose. Rows of empty pews: Mrs. Erdman, theosophic contralto, leading one-half of his choir to battle against the other half under

soprano and Christian Scientist Irma Olin; the Ladies' Guild accusing him of partiality toward St. Martha's; St. Martha's rending him for alleged kow-towing to the more select Ladies' Guild: what was the use of going on with it, and yet where the possibility of stopping? That Mrs. Rice who used to languish at him and waylay him had no sooner been committed to an insane-asylum by her children than Valeria Neff began to make love to him, under the delusion that she only wanted a convert to Bahism — now she was dangerously jealous of another woman, as crazy as Mrs. Rice, whose husband showed signs of being jealous of John: badly as he needed people at the services, Felton had had to end this business by telling all three to go away from his church and stay away.

Something, though! He must do something!

§ 2

The reading-room of the local Y.M.C.A. was a place he rarely entered: he served on one or two " Y " committees and often presided at the opening of a lecture-course sponsored by this organization, but he was not much for books and was always pressed for time. One afternoon, however, he passed through the reading-room on his way from a conference held upstairs.

Few people were about; none was at any of the ten or twelve tables. Nevertheless, some student had lately been here: a volume lay open under John's careless glance, and his eye was caught by a scored passage.

Spencer's " First Principles." The recent reader having neglected to turn it in, the librarian had not yet found opportunity to recover it. Spencer: the Doncaster " Y " prided itself on nothing more than its breadth; its Secretary was one of those who detect no incongruity in the Association's

inclusion of Mohammedan youth among its eastern members — and on that opened page, this was the marked paragraph:

> "An unbiased consideration of its general aspects forces us to conclude that Religion, everywhere present as a weft running through the warp of human history, expresses some eternal fact. . . . He who contemplates the universe from the scientific point of view must learn to see that this which we call Religion is similarly a constituent of the great whole."

John had never read Spencer — had first heard of him, at the seminary, as irreligious, and later, somewhere else, as out-of-date; yet he felt now the average small-city clergyman's pleasure in a crust flung to faith from the scientific platter. "Some eternal fact" . . .

The librarian sauntered up — a mild person with horn-rimmed spectacles.

"How do you do, Mr. Felton? Glad to see you here."

"This book — " said John, and pointed.

The librarian took it up. "Oh, yes! We're not afraid to keep our opponents on our shelves. As a matter of fact, though, this isn't much called for: it's a little too heavy for our clientèle." — Plainly he liked that word. — "Mr. Stewart's just been in here, and he was looking through it for something."

§ 3

As John walked up the quiet street, that paragraph passed back and forth across his brain. Somehow, with repetition, it didn't seem so pleasant:

"Religion expresses some eternal fact. —

"Religion expresses some eternal fact. —

"Religion expresses some eternal fact." —

Why, this tended to reduce the Christian Church to a mere symbol! Therefrom you could argue that the form of the symbol didn't matter: what the symbol stood for — that alone mattered. Deception of such sort was what poor Cameron, desperate through drink and want, had groundlessly charged against Embick and Father Barry. You could belong to any denomination and still —

John recalled from his distant student-days a concept that he had long since been content to allow to sleep on the border of consciousness: the Christian Church's basis claim, by which it insists it shall stand or fall, and so by which alone it ought to be judged, is its supernatural claim. — Strange reading for a Presbyterian minister.

Just as strange material for the thoughts of an Episcopal clergyman. Felton put the passage out of mind. He had enough troubles.

He must do something about St. John's.

§ 4

His first attempt was an institutional church. He had, from his start in Doncaster, tried to keep up, in the parish-house, the social side of parish life: now he got a good deal of money together for emphasizing this side.

The Judge contributed, and many of the country-club's members followed suit, grateful for John's support of their own organization; Celeste, written to, dispatched from the Riviera an enthusiastic check; at once, Slocum and Colfax — many persons from other denominations — gave; the local Rotary organization, too, as a body; even Gee-Gee Hornaday produced a hundred dollars, though with undisguised misgivings. The *Star-and-Post* was persuaded to sub-

merge its opposition to the Averell faction in local politics and support a " drive " for funds, on the plea that the matured plans would benefit not only one church, but the whole community.

Then Felton divided Doncaster into districts with leaders and workers for a house-to-house canvass of each district; there were nightly meetings for reports and mutual-stimulation, Ernest Grigg offering a prize for the " team " that raised the largest sum, and there was a final town meeting in the Opera House, which began with the required financial total very incomplete, but, after heated oratory — wherein Felton did not sufficiently recover his lost art to share effectively — " went over the top," when Grigg accepted a note for the lacking balance.

Came realization:

A reading-room. A billiard-room. A cooking-school. Nursing-lessons by the head-nurse of the Doncaster Hospital. The Boys' Club revivified. The Girls'. A night-school for adult workers in the Raymond and other mills. The Better Babies' Society. The " gym " and its baseball nine and football eleven and basket-ball squad. The St. John's Home-Building and Loan Association.

And then came disappointment.

It didn't come at once: but it arrived with ultimate certainty. At first people flocked to the Parish House for lessons and loans, for books and billiards and exercise; but they did not flock to church.

Gradually the varnish of newness was dulled by familiarity. Gradually it was soiled by disputes and scandals.

Books were stolen from the reading-room, where only newspapers were read — and the news-dealers said their trade suffered. Players gambled at billiards: the proprietors of the town's strictly commercial billiard-halls were angry, and the Rev. Harry Weir thundered denunciations.

Funds failed for the cooking-school; employers of labor intimated that the night-school bred discontent; the Hospital's head-nurse gave up her classes when refused an increase of salary; anyhow, the hospital-managers had complained that enrollment in their own nursing-school fell off. The mothers in the Better Babies' Society broke it up, with flaming phrases, after the judges made their awards for "Doncaster Baby-Day." The gymnasium-fittings wore out, under improper usage, with dumbfounding celerity. At the joint celebrations of the Girls' and Boys' Clubs — where there was no tactful Alice to superintend — there were ever occurrences of which the Rev. Owen Ivins was informed and over which, rubbing his hands together, he shook a reproachful head. Finally, the treasurer of St. John's Home-Building and Loan Association was entirely too short in his accounts: they didn't send respectable people to jail for that sort of thing in Doncaster, but the funds of the Association had to be liquidated, and its affairs wound up — and Felton went heavily into Grigg's debt in order to save the members.

And still the Bishop threatened, and still no more people came to John's church.

§ 5

What then to do?

It had been years since there existed any perceptible differences of creed, any real reason for separation, among most of the nominally divided sects in town. Just as if they knew that the so-called Reformation was only a schism from schismatists, they tacitly denied all post-Reformation reformations. Few members of the Presbyterian Church were able to tell you why they were Presbyterians. Herman Embick delivered no more Reformed sermons against Katz's Lutheran consubstantiation, and Katz's flock could no more

define it. Not since Weir and Ivins came here — obscure internal denominational politics retaining the latter despite the Methodist rule of pastoral changes — had Bethseda Baptist listened to expositions of literal inspiration, or the Barnes Memorial heard a syllable concerning Inward Holiness. Even Father Mochta Barry preached a good deal on the Irish Free State. But now, at least as far as were concerned most of the Protestants, throughout ecclesiastical Doncaster the non-church-going spirit had replaced the live-and-let-live relationship among the ministers by a sharp competition.

Nobody tried to convert anybody through dispute about the rightness of his own creed and the error of his essential opponent's — nobody tried to convert anybody in any way — yet every cleric attempted to draw crowds and keep them by quite unreligious "stunts" — that frank word was the Rev. Harry Weir's — by "staging attractive performances," as Felton put it, and "changing the bill as soon as it began to get cold."

The Lutherans "put on" a colored quartette from Hampton, which sang Negro-Methodist spirituals. The Reformed congregation conducted, immediately after Sunday morning service, what amounted to a lottery, so neatly screened as to be just inside the law: playing-discs — uncommonly like poker-chips — were issued only to those who put something into the collection-plate, a cent per cent exchange. The Presbyterians replaced prayer-meetings with pious, and free, moving-pictures and were unconfused when one of these turned out to be a laudatory dramatization of the life of Michael Servetus with Matthieu Ory as the hero's secret friend and John Calvin as the maliciously triumphant villain before the pyre on the slopes of Champel.

Just one really annoying incident had so far occurred: the Rev. Owen Ivins, at a loose end for something new, turned

back to something old — he planned to attract hearers to the Barnes M. E. Church by a series of exposures of "Vice in Doncaster"; he had been informed that it existed and so, supported by two impeccable lieutenants, to certify to his unblemished conduct, he paid a midnight visit to the upper regions of Mr. and Mrs. Bumpus's, only to discover there an apparently quite legal and innocuous café.

All these histrionic efforts but partially succeeded: the demand for variation often too severely taxed ingenuity. Still, they "drew" better than if their makers stuck to mere belief: John must do something.

About that time, he had read in a newspaper a dispatch from Boston, which told of an Episcopal clergyman relegated to a shrunken Chelsea church who proposed to fill it through decking-out the prescribed services with symbolic pageants and Mediæval miracle-plays, passages from the rituals of elder faiths and perhaps a revival of the religious dance. John wondered if he dared try that sort of thing, or some acclimatized attenuation of it, in Doncaster.

Suddenly, on the locomotive of suggestion, detail rode. Justine Dinwiddie had been earning a precarious living by giving dancing-lessons. That Preston girl, as "Yum-Yum," was rather a success in the amateur performance of "The Mikado" for the benefit of the country-club, last Christmas holidays. Charley Schwarz —

Why not bits of the so-called pagan rituals? John had some books here, somewhere, about them. Where were they? There was a modicum — no, a basis — of truth in all religions: in so far, poor, faded blonde Valeria Neff was right. Felton didn't any more — he knew it now — believe that Christianity, although of course fundamentally solely correct, included the whole truth: the whole truth must be too big for any one formula. Moreover, since Episcopalianism obviously did include, in its charitable breadth, some falla-

cies — the theories of the Apostolic Succession, the Episcopal polity, on its ultramontaine side the sacerdotal concept: that sort of doctrine — why not seize the perhaps partially true, and surely not wholly false, attractive features of the sects that were before Christianity appeared? To get people to church: that was the thing. Never mind the decent means, so long as you got them; once there, they'd be bound to profit, if only on the ethical side, at the bottom of whatever well verity lay concealed.

John's vestry? — He wouldn't consult them. He'd begin mildly. Then — Well, Hornaday had stipulated for an enlarged congregation before considering an increased salary: an enlarged congregation he should have — Hornaday did appear to entertain old-fashioned ideas about churches and their use, but he was preëminently a business man; business men wanted results. Just a pageant first: there'd been a pageant suggested by high authority during one of the recent general Episcopalian "drives." Then, perhaps, a touch of classicism, taken from his unread "The Golden Bough": long ago, the vestry had presented it to him, among other books, because its publisher announced it as a work on Religion. If these things "went," the ritual-dance —

John's own faith? This was no time to inquire into that. It would easily support what he proposed to do, anyhow. There was a little to be said for the silly Valeria's synthesis of religions!

And, to wind up, the other members of the Doncaster Ministerial Association — the other clergymen of the town in general? Well, it was none of their business.

He went to see Grigg. Grigg lived in bachelor state and in the best suite of rooms that the Garrison House provided; having no religion, he could give an unbiased opinion.

§ 6

He gave it, too — the very opinion Felton wanted. Seated in a Morris chair, beside a tall glass of Scotch-and-soda, and cocking his head over a long cigar, Grigg gave it:

"Rather! 'Member what's-his-name in Shakespeare — what? 'Put money in thy purse.' That's for us poor infidels. 'Put people in thy pews': that's for you dominies. As soon as they see it fills your pews, the Judge and Gee-Gee Hornaday'll sing small. — You? Broad-minded. — The other preachers? If it's a go at St. John's, they'll jolly soon all be doing it — except perhaps Father Barry and that old top down at the Russian Church. You'll see."

§ 7

John worked as hard at the innovation as he always worked at the social side of his ministerial duties. He wrote the Boston rector, and that flattered clergyman joyously forwarded, by return post, voluminous directions for a pageant of his own construction, together with long speeches in free-verse for its principal characters. Felton read this text carefully; he was broad enough himself, but it would not do to give needless offense: there was little to blue-pencil — the lines were liberal, yet, on the whole, not nearly so revolutionary as the form. Making what secret he could of his plans, he himself rehearsed the actors in the parish-house, across the street from the church. Then, on the night before that for which the performance was scheduled, he inserted a bold, three-columns-wide advertisement of it in the *Star-and-Post*, a replica, as to type and presentation, of the announcements published by the Opera House.

And he succeeded. The pageant followed Evening Prayer on a Sunday. In fact, Evening Prayer rather merged into the

performance, Felton following the benediction with a careful explanation that Sunday therewith really terminated, which possessed enough historical authority to forestall objections from the Sabbatarians. That advertisement had filled the church: the mummers having made their own costumes, the collection left a substantial profit over all expenses — including a royalty for the gentleman in Boston — and Justine Dinwiddie, as "Faith," looked her part, and so did the Preston girl and Mrs. Erdman's daughter as, respectively, "Hope" and "Charity."

Justine wore white, and had a lovely speaking voice:

"I believe!
Ask me not what I believe,
but rather what I do not believe —
for I am Faith,
and Faith believes all.
Faith believes Science;
Faith believes the essentials
of religion;
but, above all, Faith *believes.*"

It was marvellous, yet Justine somehow achieved the test-effect of the true player, which is to graft dignity upon absurdity. Her carriage was serene, her step facile; her voice, thrilled, was thrilling; and, with her now bobbed yellow hair curling around a once impish face turned, for the rôle's sake, spiritual, she emanated a sad loveliness.

A success: Hornaday wasn't there, but Mrs. Averell, Martha Washington in appearance, summed it up in her company-soprano and by her inability to be Marie Antoinette in manner. She positively simpered:

"Dear Mr. Felton — my congratulations. You know, from that advertisement, I was just a tiny bit afraid it was going to be — just a little. But it wasn't at all. Not that

I can pretend to care for Justine Dinwiddie's performance. But still — "

The pageant was repeated for the next four Sunday evenings to full houses.

§ 8

Meantime, the question arose: What next?

Having crowded his church, John must keep it full. He couldn't, he said, quite " go " a miracle-play; he would try a morality. He put into rehearsal " Everyman."

He regretted Alice; he wished Celeste were back; but he undertook the job. The chosen company read the script together; they carried it home, each to learn his or her part; ten Felton coached them in his study, separately.

Among them all, Justine amazed him. Some of the others were bad, some were fair — a few. But Justine had imagination, and no fear. John felt an honest pity for the thwarted life of this lonely girl.

" Don't you ever hear from any of your old friends any more? " he asked her.

She was standing before his desk in that attitude which her latest speech from the old morality-play demanded. Keeping the pose, she yet gave him her violet eyes:

" What ones? "

" Well " — he hesitated — " Dora Zalokostas, for instance."

" No. — What comes next? Oh, I remember! " She shook her golden hair and looked straight in front of her — at somebody that was not present:

> " ' Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide,
> In thy most need to go by thy side.' "

The town still buzzed about her wildness — all but the Prestons. Queer disappearances — still queerer appearances in queer places —

Yet, when she had such eyes — and such a voice — could those things be true which gossip said of her?

Felton couldn't believe them — didn't. She was, with wonderful willingness, wonderfully helping him in this new venture: Alice alone could have helped him more — and only yesterday the Judge intimated that he'd forbidden Tom's return to Doncaster as long as Justine remained in it! John said to himself:

" If Celeste were home, and I had her to back me up, I'd get her to get Tom a really good job, and then I'd marry him to this girl."

Aloud, he said to Justine:

" Or Tom Averell — don't you ever hear from him? "

Justine, as if a wand had been waved, ceased to be that creature of the monkish dramatist's fancy. She turned upon Felton the face of a Justine Dinwiddie cut in stone.

" Tom Averell? " repeated John thinking she had perhaps not heard.

Her movements were rapid enough now. Her hat had been lying on a chair, where she'd tossed it; she grabbed it and jammed it on her head with the flat of one hand.

" Why, what's the matter? " Felton gasped. " Where are you going? "

" Home. I don't like this part. I'm not going to play it."

He sprang up — started to come around the desk at her. " What have I done? I'm — "

" You've tried a part that doesn't suit you. You're not a priest with a right to ask such questions. Good — "

He understood. He got between her and the door:

" Of course you must go if you want to, but you mustn't go before I've apologized — "

"I don't want your apology!"

"— and explained. At least let me explain. I asked that question — which I see I hadn't any right to ask — because I believe in you, and because I'd just been thinking that, if I had things my way, I'd marry you to Tom Averell."

What was it Alice had once said about Justine needing a friend? As suddenly as she had changed before, she changed again. She gave Felton one look; then seized both his hands and kissed them:

"You've got to forgive me — only everybody snoops and talks — and you talked as if you thought you had a right to. I mean, like a confessor, and you aren't one. I mean, I thought you were trying to be. And all the time you were actually trying to be decent!"

John freed himself. "My dear," he said, "please forgive me."

"No — I love you for it. You mustn't go on with it — only I do love you for it. Yes, Tom writes once in a while, but he doesn't like to write letters, and I don't either. Now, that's enough. It's going to be glorious to know you sympathize — only I mustn't ever let on I know you do, and you mustn't ever show it again." She tore off her hat and threw it away. She resumed exactly the pose that his ill-inspired query had broken. "We've got to get on with this:

"'Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide —'"

Felton obeyed her; but, before she left, he told her all about his dreams for selections from ritual-dances, provided this morality-play was a success.

§ 9

There were general rehearsals — made by the energy and talent of the pagan Justine — marred by the inevitable bick-

erings, the unexpected droppings-out, the despairing substitutions of less cardinal personalities.

There was the advertisement in the *Star-and-Post* — this time causing Father Barry to intimate to his parishoners that all that was attractive in Anglicanism derived from Rome, but that morality-plays, even miracle-plays, were not made for presentation within a church — and causing all the envious Ministerial Association to join hands with the papists.

So, finally, there was a hopeless dress rehearsal at which every one seemed to know less about the script than on the evening of its first reading.

Justine, however — again jamming on her little toque with the flat of her hand — laughingly whispered:

"Never mind! Real actors always say a bad last-rehearsal means a good first-night. Anyhow, you bet you can count on me. I haven't forgotten how nice you've been to me: I'll save the show — I'll surprise you."

"You can't surprise me," said John, "for I know how good you're sure to be."

§ 10

She, next night, with her keener eye for such effects, doubtless thought the show required saving; but nobody else did — not even Felton. His preoccupation made his morning service mechanical, yet something or other always made it that; his nervousness lent a speed to Evening Prayer, which gave Hornaday's jaw an added unpleasantness. Nevertheless, the church was filled — especially by disapproving non-Episcopalians — and when John came to the chancel-steps every neck craned.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore."

The choir sang "Amen" — Mrs. Erdman and Irma Olin looking drawn swords at each other.

There was no recessional as yet: that was to come after the performance, thus binding the morality-play to the service, and perhaps drawing some of the audience — it was by no means a mere congregation — to other services. John did descend to a front pew, where he could act as prompter and where he found Grigg brightly ensconsed; but everybody else, except the organist, kept his previous place: the organist surrendered position to the Preston girl, who had arranged to play, in the advertisement's phrase, incidental music.

She began with something in Palestrina's Flemish style and then glided into the *Agnus Dei* of his *Missa Brevis*. This was the players cue: pushing their wheeled stage, they entered from a door in the south transept, under the Courtlandt Litchfield memorial window, and came to pause at the head of the centre aisle.

All went fairly well. Some stumblings there were, but John readily corrected them. Justine was excellent, and young Schwarz's plutonian make-up made up for his uncertain delivery: whatever it owed to the Dutch of Peter Dorlandus, that sixteenth-century English morality somehow remained a part of sixteenth-century English literature and early sixteenth-century English faith, in this twentieth-century American town, and upon the lips of these modern American amateurs.

At the close, a murmur of approval ran through the audience. Mindful of subsequent criticism, Felton rose and faced west, his hands uplifted:

"Please — no applause."

And then he turned. The players should be starting out behind their vehicular stage, which, singing "'Forward' be our watchword," the choir should follow, while John brought

up the rear. But the Preston girl had begun to play a strange, an utterly unfamiliar, kind of music — if it was music — and the choir sat spellbound, looking at a totally changed Justine.

She had slipped off her gray cloak and deftly tied up what the barber had left of her golden hair. She wore a short gown of white silk, low at the neck and sleeveless, and her mediæval sandals, in this company, were become Hellenic. She was dancing. She was dancing slowly, her body bent far forward — with infinite grace — with arms that were like wings — with legs that were like the tail of some long bird —

As one person, the audience gasped. Toward the back of the church, two or three people rose, whether to see more clearly or to leave, John couldn't tell.

"Down in front!" cried somebody behind them.

Before Felton could decide what to do, the dancer tossed him a note. He caught it — somehow, he read it:

> ". . . my surprise . . . save the show . . . out of a book on Greek dancing . . . one of those that Boston rector had in his —"

Stop her? It would only accentuate the event — and it would, a blow from a friend, only add to the rain of gossiping stripes she had already daily to bear. John dreaded scenes; he remembered reading in the newspapers of this dance and its use in that Chelsea church of his correspondent. After all, it was one of the things he had intended to present later. . . .

Only by that time he would have educated what the "Y" secretary called his clièntele. Now —

But suppose somebody else stopped her. Somebody down here in the congre — audience?

Rather than the horror of any interruption now —

Felton was saying:

" We conclude with a Greek religious-dance — religious. It is very ancient — and reverent. It is of — of Delian origin." The data came jerkily back to him. " It is ascribed to Theseus and — called the Dance of the Labyrinth. It imitates the flight of sacred cranes — or semi-sacred. The Greek word is Γέραγος. — But it is a religious dance! "

" It's jolly good, anyhow," chuckled Ernest Grigg, cocking his bald head.

" A crane? " muttered Gee-Gee Hornaday to his neighbor. " It's the daughter of Herodias, that's what it is! "

All the rest of the audience were beyond comment.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

§ 1

HOW he lived through the storm evoked by that prematurely presented ritual dance, Felton had never liked to recall. He liked to recall only that he stood up for Justine. The rest was dreadful.

Exactly as if it was all as he intended it to be, he formed a recessional procession after Justine ended her performance and stilled her feet:

> "Weak are earthly praises,
> Dull the songs of night:
> Forward into triumph!
> Forward into light!"

Alford's hymn ended. John frowned down the snickering choir-boys, the flushed women choristers. They left, and the players, except that a radiant Justine lingered a moment for his thanks.

"We were pretty rotten actors, but my dance did save the show, didn't it?"

He looked at her face glowingly sincere. "You were first-rate," said he.

"Of course," said Justine, "they wouldn't ever have stood for a thing like that in old St. Alban's." She became quickly grave. "Dear old daddy — times have changed a lot in the little while since his time."

§ 2

It was Felton's custom, adopted after the beginning of his futile endeavor at launching an institutional church, to take off surplice and cassock quickly and, his coat donned, hurry to the front of St. John's, where he sped the parting congregation. He did not shirk that now.

However, he gained little light from this ordeal. Most of the people whose opinions he wanted seemed to have vanished; most of those who lingered, talking excitedly in little groups, passed him at last with no significant word as response to the hand-shake that he gave each one.

"Good-evening. I hope you'll come again —

"Good-night. We're always glad to see you here."

He hated it!

One young fellow grinned:

"You can bank on me. It was some show!"

§ 3

In the rectory, Sally hovered at John's study door. Felton knew she meant to waylay him.

"In a church!" said Sally. "Dancin' — and pagan dancin' at that!"

"It was a religious dance, Sally."

"How kin there be such?"

"There used to be, in the olden times." He tried to make his voice patient and informative.

"Well, thank Gawd, I didn't live in none of 'em! An' a clergyman's daughter: that makes it all the worse. They're sayin' now it was after all her drew her father to what he done, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it was."

"Nonsense. You mustn't talk like that." Felton was irritated. "Didn't you dance when you were younger?"

"Not in no church — nor yit ever hear of it afore."

She couldn't give a real reason for her sentiments, of course: nobody in Doncaster could give a real reason for such religious opinions as remained there — when they existed at all, they were mere prejudices. No, Sally couldn't give a reason; but she almost gave notice.

§ 4

Felton looked out at the graves in St. John's quiet churchyard. . . .

Would he weather this storm?

What if he did? There'd only be another.

And another.

Until, some day —

He had never altogether ceased to regret Alice. Only now and then did he feel the old anguish of lost love — almost never nowadays. Rationality had got its mailed foot, long ago, upon the neck of that sentiment: a fight, but rationality won — only once in a while did the victim move. The thing wouldn't have worked out — neither Alice nor John would have been happy. He understood this so well that he seldom inquired of her parents about her. She had loved him only for what she thought he stood for — whatever that was — but he always regretted the loss of her sturdy companionship . . .

If he'd had time to prepare these people for the ritual dancing — to get them to it gradually — he was sure he might have filled his church permanently. And once it was permanently full, the Bishop would certainly have winked at the means of attraction. Especially if Celeste came back.

She would come back.

But when?

And mightn't it be too late now?

For now, even if an open row had been prevented, somebody was sure to kick to the Bishop.

§ 5

Judge Averell, the next few days seemed to show, thought it wise to avoid discussion of that unfortunate occurrence in St. John's: he stroked his white moustache and held aloof. Mrs. Averell, at a crisis, always dutifully shared her husband's views. Their daughter's part in it, and their fondness for Justine, inhibited the Prestons. Hornaday had left town on a brief business trip.

So much for Felton's congregation — just yet.

§ 6

What the other people in town thought, John didn't know, and, save for the reaction within his own parish, he didn't care. He saw that the *Star-and-Post* — there were no pressing politics about just then — dismissed the performance with a notice exactly as discreet as gratitude for his advertisement required. The Ministerial Association? He deliberately absented himself from its next meeting. He felt he was quite right in all he had done, in all he had proposed to do.

Outside the Ministerial Association, the town — the greater part of Doncaster being no more religiously inclined than the greater part of most towns of Doncaster's size in modern America — was not much more than amused. Any little slip in a church or a parson must be inherently humorous. Dentist Colfax, forever saving grocer Slocum's teeth from pyorrhea, laughed a pleased falsetto into that always cupped ear, this event falling beyond the dominion of their own conventicle; the greater part of Doncaster merely smiled.

Ikey Rosenbaum was an exception, but then he was a Jew. He was shocked. He said so to Ernest Grigg, on the step before the Rosenbaum clothing-store, where he and the little, bald-headed man in tweeds had discussed a previous excitement in St. John's.

"Well, I advised him to put on the pageant, but this other thing was a bit too thick for 'em," said Grigg. "I told you that fellow was going to come a cropper, — a jump off the deep end. All the same, it will be beastly for that bishop of his to make a mess. Meeker's a pretty bad hat."

Ikey shook his head. "Still, he oughtn't to have done it, Felton oughtn't."

Grigg had been looking up the subject of ritual dancing, as he generally did look up anything that was in dispute anywhere near him. He straightway launched his conversational barque upon the waters of the religious dance: primitive war dances and funeral dances, the Pythagorean theory as set forth in Davies' "Orchestra," the shield-dance of the Roman Salii, Greek choral dancing in classic tragedies, themselves of religious origin. Snapping his birdlike eyes, Grigg declared that the early Christian choirs used to dance, before the decline of the Agape, and that there was something mighty like dancing in the Mozarabic Mass at Toledo as short a while ago as 1760.

"What," he demanded, "would your friend Father Barry say to that?"

"I dunno," chuckled Rosenbaum; "but us Jews we don't hold py such doin's anyhow."

"You Jews? My word," said Grigg, "it's no good your grousing! Didn't your toff David dance before the Lord?"

"Sure," Ikey confidently assented, "but ain't you effer heard v'at Saul's daughter said about him?"

§ 7

John had been certain that Justine's precipitation of his programme would move somebody to complain to Meeker. Hornaday complained.

> "Our mutual friend, your vestryman Mr. G. G. Hornaday," wrote the Bishop to Felton, "has kindly stopped in to see me while passing through here on a business-mission. I regret to say that he informs me — "

And then Meeker again came down on John, John said to himself, like a ton of bricks: Felton's slang, as became a clergyman, remained somewhat *démodé*.

Anything more like this and the rector would learn, he was episcopally warned, that not all ecclesiastical laws were dead letters. The Bishop had been pleased to hear of the energy of St. John's when that parish started so promisingly upon a broad campaign of sociological activities; he was proportionately pained when he learned how those high projects declined upon desuetude. Now —

And so on for three garrulous pages of type-script.

§ 8

Everybody got to know about it — somehow. The Judge's rosebud mouth achieved gravity: if the Bishop officially disapproved, every good churchman in the diocese had to disapprove also. Sally, Low Church, but with a veneration for the episcopate as the backbone of her sect, became so glum that the rectory was depressing. Justine, cruelly undeceived and thus realizing that her desire to help Felton had more than hindered him, rushed to him with an honest red

under her rouge and an unchecked dew of tears on the violets of her eyes.

"It was all my fault — and you've let everybody think it was you planned it. There I was, keeping my mouth shut tight, because I wanted you to get the credit, when all the time it wasn't getting you credit with that rotten old Gee-Gee or nosey Bishop Meeker, but only — I won't stand for that! I'm going to take the blame."

"You're not going to do anything of the kind," John crisply told her.

"I'll say I am. I'm used to taking blame, and you aren't."

"I won't have it," said Felton.

But he had to. She straightway told it everywhere — and the town, paying no attention to his protests, recaptured enough interest in the event to say that her "pulling a dance in a church" was exactly what it ought to have expected of Justine Dinwiddie. Sally softened perceptibly. To each other, the Averells said — the Judge first to his wife, and therefore then Mrs. Averell, albeit with some reluctance, to the Judge:

"Thank Heaven we saved Tom from her!"

John was almost angry with the girl, but she persisted, at first unknown to him, in her efforts to save the show. She was no more a mistress of the art of correspondence than most modern girls, but she wrote the facts to the Bishop, and this Felton learned when the Bishop wrote again to him.

Meeker took back his denunciations of the rector for arranging that dance — so much he did gallantly, as was his bounden duty. But he didn't like to be mistaken, and he liked less the bounden duty of acknowledging a mistake to an inferior. He might have vented his irritability upon that vestryman who had misinformed him: he didn't. He declared John to blame for recruiting to the ranks of his

players a girl of Justine's rash tendencies — "all of whose impulses seem to run in the wrong direction"; the performance of even a morality-play in a church was questionable, and the inclusion of Justine in the cast was an indiscretion:

> ". . . You should have reason to know that I have been seriously dissatisfied with your rectorship in the past; it is incumbent upon me to warn you that I am more dissatisfied with it in the present. Membership in St. John's ought to increase; it must be increased."

And this time, doubtless, Hornaday was behind the Bishop!

§ 9

So here was Felton at the old grind again — and hopeless. There had been a young day when he was certain of his ability to do a valuable work in Doncaster. . . .

He couldn't blame himself: no man tried harder. If a congregation, a population, was immovably lethargic, how was an unassisted clergyman open to censure? How could he help, in the long run, suffering from something of their own unresponsiveness to spiritual stimuli?

John wished he could quit.

Quit?

He had no training for any other sort of work. He had no savings — he was in debt.

People didn't trust in business a man that had left the ministry. Look at Cameron.

§ 10

Everything else had gone on of late pretty much as usual. No word, it seemed, came from the vanished Dora, and Felton forgot her except when he would happen to catch sight on the evening street of her more-and-more stoop-shouldered father. News from Alice must reach the Averells regularly, but they recounted little of it to John unless he asked — and his asking had become purely perfunctory. There was some rumor of discontent at the Raymond mills, yet Celeste gave no sign of returning: she only sent directions that her Archangel window of dismantled St. Alban's should be transferred to St. John's north transept, if the vestry wanted it — the vestry did. Grigg remained at the age to which he had anchored his life long ago, busy in business, busier espousing any opposition party and busiest in the propaganda of his Victorian type of atheism. Cameron was each week drinking a little harder: Heaven knew how he raised the money. Nobody ever seriously thought about Courtie's murder.

§ 11

". . . and so good works remain the standard whereby we must test — "

If he could only snare that long-escaped power over words — over the spoken phrase — if he could only take fire — John felt he might find some joy in this sort of thing: at least the joy of battle. He couldn't — and he had only the weariness of war.

He had turned heavily to the sermon again. Now he pushed it aside and got out his check book.

The interest on that Litchfield note was due tomorrow. It must go to Judge Averell: Courtie had of course nominated his wife as his executor; but Celeste, in departing abroad,

shifted the work to the shoulders of the Judge — she didn't like him, yet, for all his political entanglements, she frankly admitted his financial ability and integrity, and she wasn't often the person to let her feelings stand in the way of her judgment. Felton studied the last used stub: yes, he would have to overdraw to meet that interest.

Grigg, the trust-company's present president — grace of absent Celeste — had been mighty good about John's overdrafts — even suggested some more loans — but the whole situation was deadly. Such of John's fellow Episcopalian clergymen in the diocese as presided over better salaried cures were forever telling him that they were no more easy: if the parish was poor, the pay was poor; if the parish was rich, though the pay was commensurately higher, the expenses were high out of all proportion — you had to live up to your position. Well, Felton would like a chance to try it. Just now, if something wasn't done, he'd be lucky to stay where he was: unless his charge improved, Meeker — there being no Celeste at hand to intervene, and Hornaday's odd survival of the old sort of religious prejudices having apparently sent him on the war-path — was quite capable of stirring it up to the point of demanding its rector's resignation.

This confounded sermon — He'd got to get it done, whether or no.

"... good works remain the standard whereby we must test our —"

What a two years!

What a grind!

BOOK FIVE: The Bishop

BOOK FIVE: The Bishop

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

§ 1

"COURSE I told the Bishop," said Hornaday. He seated himself, uninvited, in that chair which was still kept just on the other side of John's desk. "I calc'lated 'twas my dooty to."

He had returned to Doncaster only this morning. He met Felton's immediate reproach with his usual blunt stolidity.

"It didn't occur to you," asked John, flushing a little, "that it might also be your duty to speak to me?"

"Can't say as it did."

"You are one of my wardens."

"M'yes."

"Don't you think you ought, as such, to have had a word with me first?"

"M'no. Next night, I figgered your show was a stunt to draw folks to St. John's, get a bigger congregation by-an'-by and then strike for a raise. Well, me and you'd talked salary-raisin' once afore — and it didn't come to much."

"Still —" began Felton.

"'Sides," his caller imperturbably continued, "I was takin' the night up-train, and I didn't have time to waste."

"Then tell me just why you disapproved, anyhow."

"Church's no place for theatricals."

"The drama," said John, remembering something that his Bostonian clerical correspondent had written, "began as a form of worship, and the morality-play —"

"I know all about that, and the religiousness of dancin' in a church, too: Ernest Grigg collared me on my way down here."

"Well then?"

"I don't agree."

"No?"

"M'no."

"You didn't object to the pageant?"

"Different. Wasn't at it, though."

"I see. So you told the Bishop what you'd seen at the morality?"

"Sure." Hornaday smiled in his best manner, displaying his long, yellow upper teeth. "What's bishops for?"

John wanted to say that he couldn't guess. He said, however:

"If it isn't to teach morality, I'd like to hear what you think a church is for."

"That's consid'able easy: it's for the worship of God."

It struck Felton that here was one of the few men of his acquaintance who would have given, unqualified, exactly this answer. But there was no use arguing with such a survival:

"At any rate, I appreciate your coming straight to me about it as soon as you did get home, Mr. Hornaday."

"M'yes." The vestryman stroked his equine chin. "Only 't wasn't 'xactly that I come for." He paused. John looked slightly apprehensive. Then Hornaday went on: "'Twas to get a raise you had that play, wasn't it?"

"It was to get people into the habit of coming to St. John's."

"And I told you when you got more church-members mebbie you'd get more wages."

"Oh, well — yes! If you want to put it that way."

"I do." Hornaday paused again, and again resumed:

"These times, people are tryin' most every whichway to get people to God's house — 'cept the preachin' to 'em of God's word. You've tried everything else: why'n't you try that?"

Felton looked Hornaday hard in the eyes, but Hornaday's eyes retained steadfastly their power to weave enigmas. "You don't mean — you can't mean doctrinal sermons?"

"M'yes."

"Doctrinal sermons?"

"Jes' so. Strong doctrine."

"Then you're the only person in the congregation that feels that way."

"How d'you know till you try? 'Matter of fact, you're wrong there: I'm not. I didn't come jes' quite straight off here from the the train, you understand. I talked a while to Judge Averell and some of the other vestrymen: they kind of think there might be somethin' in it, if only novelty, for a preacher of a sect to tell folk of his sect what they had ought to believe to be in his sect, and what he believes. They think there might be somethin' in it, and I know there would — if t'was done right."

Although Hornaday's face remained expressionless, the fact that this was one of the longest speeches he had ever uttered within John's hearing carried to the rector the sense of an ultimatum. "Judge Averell and some of the other vestrymen!" That implied, of course, a majority. Hornaday back of it — but who was it (it must be somebody, one would wager, knowing Hornaday) that Hornaday had put forward to influence this majority? Felton ventured a conjecture:

"You took this up with the Bishop, too?"

"M'yes."

There it was! John remembered Dinwiddie: once Meeker began to dislike Dinwiddie, there began as well suspicions of Dinwiddie's orthodoxy.

An ultimatum, indeed!

"And just what," he inquired with as little irony as he could — "just what topic did Bishop Meeker suggest that you suggest the vestry should suggest my preaching on?"

Hornaday didn't so much as blink. "Well, we thought's how it might be a good thing, Mr. Felton, if you'd begin with a series of sermons on one of the creeds."

§ 2

It was pronounced as John's punishment by the Bishop — for the rector's long course of only just meeting his superior's exactions, and, still more, for not being quite so wrong in the latest instance but that Meeker had had to come very close to apology.

It was the test imposed by Hornaday to resolve doubts engendered in his soul — perhaps of his own faith by the prevailing agnosticism of the times, perhaps of Felton's by that unfortunate morality and Justine's saving of the show. John must endure the one and pass the other or soon be compelled to resign.

And here was the rector's first answer, published by the *Star-and-Post* in the same space and type as had announced "Everyman":

WHAT DO *YOU* BELIEVE?

At St. John's P. E. Church,

Beginning NEXT SUNDAY — 7:30 P.M. —
And Continuing Each Sunday Thereafter For

The Following

TWO WEEKS,

REV. JOHN FELTON, RECTOR,

Will Preach A Series Of Sermons

FOR EVERY MAN AND WOMAN IN DONCASTER

on

THE CREED OF CHRISTENDOM

WHAT DO *YOU* BELIEVE?

"By Jove," said Grigg, "I'm so fed up with hearing these parsons tell what Christendom doesn't have to believe that wild horses wouldn't keep me away from a place where somebody'll tell me what it does have to."

At the Ministerial Association, where the affair of Justine had just about blown over, the members, before John's tardy arrival, shook their heads.

"I'm told — of course I don't know," said the Rev. Owen Ivins, the Methodist — "and I hope it's not true — but I'm told there's some trouble with Mr. Hornaday behind all this move of brother Felton's."

"It's old stuff, anyhow," said the Rev. Harry Weir, of Bethseda Baptist.

That disciple of Martin Luther, the Rev. Edgar J. Katz, expressed, however, the mature view of the Association:

"These creedal topics," said he, with a worried look, "are so controversial!"

§ 3

Many men in Felton's position would have considered his punishment light, and it was partially an endeavor so to consider it that inspired the challenge of his advertisement. But then, alone in his study, with its quiet view of church and churchyard, he read the Creeds.

Not those peculiar to other denominations, of course. Who, even among the confessors of them, ever did? Formal codification or catechetical cataclysm as it happened to be, what grown-up Calvinist really knew the Gallican Confession — what adult Lutheran was still familiar with the Confession of Ausburg, or any of the shifting substitutes therefor —what Catholic layman burdened his mind by the Creed of Pius IV? John only vaguely recalled by name these once weighty compositions.

Nor yet that tremendous *Quicumque Vult* foisted upon St. Athanasius:

> "This is the Catholick Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

It was printed solely in the English version of the Book of Common Prayer, with orders to be recited but thirteen times a year, and he'd heard that at least one Anglican Bishop had said hardly anybody in the Church believed it, anyhow.

No, Meeker, or Hornaday through the senile Meeker, had, of course and most fortunately, meant one of the two Creeds of which one or other is said at virtually every service of the Episcopal Church — either the Nicene, accepted by more

than half of Christendom, and, without its interpolated *filioque* clause, the sole test creed of the East, or the so-called "Apostles'" that every Christian sect at least countenances.

These, from continual repetition, leading his congregation, John knew by heart. To his consternation, he found that he had not for years known them by head.

He went through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan statement, it being the longer, phrase by phrase, as the Prayer Book gave it:

> ". . . Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father . . . incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary . . . was made man . . . rose again . . ."

It was stupifying, yet he was agonizedly alive to it — it was unbelievable, yet a visible fact! How many times every year had he said that creed — for how many years? Nevertheless, here it was, a statement of explicit dogma that he had not — no, not even in his confirmation-classes — really analyzed since forced to, with a half-mind only, in his seminary days; a formula the full significance of which he had somehow, for his own real self, never anywhere or at any time, until this instant, comprehended.

What in the world had kept it alive for six hundred years?

He searched feverishly among the books he so seldom consulted. Here somebody quoted Poynter:

> "The power of the Nicene faith was that it was *really believed.* The creed of Nicea would not have been a particle of good to anyone if compiled merely as an exercise in metaphysical fancy. It would have had no driving force behind it, and

soon would have been relegated to the museum of curiosities. People believed in it; therefore it was powerful."

Believed literally! Through all disasters, changes political and social, advancement of culture and civilization, growth of learning, progress of science, for twice three centuries! Cameron had once said as much.

Well, something, John now quite thoroughly knew, had quietly happened to him. Not because of study, not because of thought — he'd for long neither studied these matters nor thought much of them — nor did it occur to him that it was perhaps with him, as with all except doubt's leaders, because of lack of these requisite processes — yet it had happened.

Something.

"Broadening," he said.

Anyway, he couldn't accept all these dogmas at their surface value.

The printed words flashed before his widened eyes, thundered in his ears, as explicit artillery. A bolt of pain struck him . . .

And now he was called upon to expound the formula!

"Strong doctrine," Hornaday had said.

These phrases were more than merely strong.

Felton called up all his reserves of resourcefulness and courage. There must be some explanation — some way 'round. He turned rapid leaves . . .

What was this?

Nobody seemed to know exactly how many bishops attended the First Council of Nicea. Athanasius put the number at 318, this man Eusebius said 250; but of all that were there nearly the whole lot appeared to come from the Eastern Churches. Felton counted the Westerners on his fingers:

"Marcus of Calabria — one. Hosius of Cordova — two. Nicasius of Dijon — three. Nonnus of Pannonia — four. Celician of Carthage — five!"

Was that all? In any case, the council must have been entirely under Eastern control. The Episcopal Church sprang from Rome and the West. Did it have to accept —

But it did accept — as Rome did, and as did a lot of the Protestants, too.

Believed. Six hundred years. Believed by some people today. Still, other creeds, now admittedly false, had endured many years and swayed many peoples; although faith gives force, "belief or disbelief cannot alter the reality of things." John wouldn't think of that — quite yet. He read:

> "The ultimate mystery of things may not be attainable by our minds through their own efforts; but it, or parts of it, are communicable to us by God, and actually have been communicated by Revelation embodied in a Church whose mission is to teach it through all ages. This is the Nicene position."

The difficulty with the Nicene Creed was precision. The Apostles' was more general — surely. And it was common to all sects.

To the Apostles' Creed, Felton turned feverishly.

§ 4

> ". . . Conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary — "

He had believed that — once: he remembered his ordination vows. Taken it as a matter of course, anyhow.

This accomplished, he had dismissed it from his mind. Oh, there'd been a good deal of talk lately against the doctrine of the Virgin Birth and what not among the radicals of the Presbyterian and Baptist persuasions, even in Felton's denomination! But busy clergymen, intent upon the welfare of their own especial flocks, left such quarrels to those theological scholars who had nothing better to do than squabble over dusty tenets. The trouble was that today this dogma, and others like it, had been meanly put before John and his opinion demanded — and that the something which had happened to him said:

"You don't believe it."

Why not?

On one occasion he had been able to will faith. He tried now. Vainly.

Why didn't he believe?

Because — Well, because it wasn't reasonable.

"But there are other things in the faith that aren't reasonable."

> ". . . he rose again from the dead . . . I believe in . . . the Resurrection of the Body — "

John saw himself at murdered Courtie's funeral, heard himself at many funerals — for the first time: "In my flesh shall I see God." And here — This Apostles' Creed was as bad as the Nicene!

He wished no good to G. G. Hornaday.

The Virgin Birth: Felton thumbed his prayer-book. He was astonished to find how frequently the Virgin Birth was mentioned or implied in phrases of the services with which his lips were on such intimate terms that he could almost have said them backwards. Yet how could he preach a sermon that must involve some exposition of the Virgin Birth? —

And it had to be done!

His own mother had believed —

Suddenly his robust figure quivered, his brown eyes filled. He walked rapidly to the study door and locked it. Then he fell on his knees at the side of his desk, where his troubled parishioners used to sit. His inattentive feet sent crashing that chair which Cameron had once occupied, and Dora Zalokostas. His arm swept over the congregational card-index, the calendar, the opened books that he had been helplessly searching. Much as Cameron had once done in this same spot, he bowed his head.

"Lord," he prayed — "Lord, I believe — Help Thou mine unbelief!"

§ 5

At a special meeting of the Ministerial Association — held in Katz's "library" that was so like an office and called for discussion of some problem of municipal reform to which Felton could lend no more than a polite attention — John mentioned, with patent carelessness, the Virgin Birth as one of the themes with which he must deal. Everybody said "Of course," and tried to shift the subject of talk. The Episcopalian, however, held it a while longer. It struck him, suddenly, that at none of their sessions had such matters ever been mentioned — at least not for years. Suspicion seized him.

Stewart shifted in his chair. "It goes without saying," he began, "that we all accept the essence of the statement." He appealed with his fixed smile. "Still, the question's a very vexed one, and, for my part, I let it alone. There are a great many things that are better left alone. Do you hear of me" — his smile broadened, but it wasn't comfortable — "preaching on the Westminster Confession?"

Odd query to put among letter-files and wire-baskets, ledgers and rubber-stamps. There could be but one answer.

"Don't you think it's more vital to deal with conduct?" brisk Mr. Katz inquired anxiously.

"Weir," said John, "not all of you Baptists deal exclusively with conduct, anyhow."

Weir ran long fingers through his tawny locks. "Aw, in the backwoods you'll find some of our folks who still worry over theology — the kind of folks that burn books they don't agree with — but all our educated pastors are as willing as any others to accept a doctrine without poking a pitchfork into its ribs every Sunday."

Oddly enough, his brusqueness accomplished more for ease than Stewart's finesse had done. Katz laughed. Embick, chuckling under his crisp moustache, narrated how, in the far-off days when people still asked him about the Virgin Birth, he chust delled dem to read de early faders — and dey didn't. Ivins cheerfully rubbed his hands and shook his head:

"Some have the gift of faith: some — I'm told — haven't. You can't do anything for the ones that haven't — except, to be sure, pray for them."

Thus, then, despite their evasions, it came home to John, here in the "study" so like an office: not one of these ministers really believed the claims of the Christian Church in the sense in which that Church had formulated them. Cameron had told him, and he, Felton, refused to listen. Of his fellow-members of the Association, a couple perhaps — but even they almost consciously — fooled themselves; the rest fooled their congregations — and all had, for all these years, fooled Felton, which was facile enough because, all these years, he hadn't bothered. They no more believed than he did.

Could it be that this was typical?

That this was what was the matter with most churches?

Discovery of such lack of faith on the part of his com-

panions: the shock of it was nearly as great as his discovery of his own unbelief.

§ 6

When the meeting was over — whatever it was about — he waited for Stewart — felt the urgent need of bringing especially this smiling minister to the carpet. Stewart seemed to guess, and not to be anxious for John's company. Felton, however, was pugnaciously persistent; he walked, at last, up a residential street with Cameron's successor, who tried to make pleasant conversation on trivialities.

"What you said in there," John interrupted — "about accepting the 'essence' of a creedal statement: wouldn't it lead to what might be called 'symbolism'?"

Stewart was more than ever the careful district attorney:

"It might be for some." He gave Felton a rapid scrutiny. "There's even one new school of Christian thought," he hurried on, "which goes farther — as of course you know. I mean the men who hold that no one individual can get all the universe's mystery, but that the first-class mind wants all the data it can get: lays hold of it and makes out of it — or slow experience does — the creed that suits the need of its times."

"I shouldn't call that exactly Christian thought," said John.

"Well, its big exponents are inside the church. Of course, I don't say I agree —"

"What do you agree with?"

"Those fellows say that all creeds contain some truth and some error," Stewart pursued: "changes occur with changing requirements: none's final. They even go as far as to say Christianity's like that: began in answer to the needs of one stage of human history — endured through certain succeeding stages because it adapted itself, or was adapted, to them.

They point out that it's altered recently — which most of us can't deny — is altering today, and must alter again if it's to continue. Of course without altering its essential characteristic: insistence on Service."

"But," John doggedly kept it up — "I'd like to know what you think."

"Me?" Stewart looked almost humble. "Oh, I don't count!"

"You do — to yourself." Felton had almost dropped into the old forms and said "to God."

"Well — ah — what I think is this: that, with a little Christian charity, we can find room for both the Modernists and the Fundamentalists in any Church."

They were passing the Judge's house. The ready-made statues on the lawn looked at these pedestrians with stony Nineteenth Century incredulity.

"The other day," said John slowly, "I saw a book that you'd been reading in the Y. M. C. A. library: Spencer."

Did Stewart flush? — "Oh, yes. 'First Principles.' It's rather old-fashioned now."

"There was a part of it marked. You'd been reading that: the book was open at it. I thought that passage, taken in connection with what you said this afternoon about accepting a statement of doctrine 'in essence' — "

The Presbyterian pastor laughed uneasily. "Well, you've got me there. I guess I'll have to throw myself on your mercy — but, after all, the way I feel about that's only the way some of our best men, and some of your best men, feel."

"Regarding the Virgin Birth?"

"Regarding that, among other things. You know. Our earliest written New Testament records are some of Paul's epistles: Paul didn't mention the Virgin Birth, so it must have been a doctrine promulgated after his time."

"He couldn't mention everything that started before he did."

"No — but it looks queer."

"It looks to me as if it affected the whole subject of the Incarnation."

"Not necessarily. But even as to that" — Stewart was in for it — guessed John's secret trouble and decided to risk somewhat on his discretion — "we can truthfully contend that Jesus claimed to be God's son in just a moral sense — just the sense that we are all God's sons, except that Jesus was of course more so because he was better."

This was getting rather close to Felton's own fears; yet he hadn't forgotten all of the New Testament:

"But the Sanhedrim condemned him as a blasphemer because he made the claim in the — in the way we always used to accept it!"

Stewart, thoroughly embarked, wasn't sure about that. "Anyhow," said he, "we needn't worry; we can rest our faith on one solid fact: Christ's character and teachings" — the pastor was very devout about this — "include the fullest exposition of God's character and God's will that has ever been made in this world."

Certainly, John had heard opinions of this sort before. They had meant nothing to him then: he was too busy. Was he still too busy? There waited those sermons on the Creed to be written — and delivered. In a general way, he knew the thing that Stewart represented, but he had not considered it a vital movement in Christianity — until now.

Now?

He said:

"I don't see that sort of thing. It's a compromise."

"But" — Stewart's caution was swept away at last by the joy of propaganda — "Your own Episcopalians — lots of them — take exactly that stand. You're going to preach on

the creeds: well, one of your own bishops, the Bishop of Massachusetts — says, in a book of his, that " — Stewart was careful and exact — " in as much as a creed stands for the essentials of the faith, and as a belief in this very thing that's worrying you — the Virgin Birth — isn't to some people essential, an Episcopal clergyman can honestly join in any recital of the creeds."

It was upon John's lips to inquire why this principle couldn't be extended to disbelief in a number of other things; but, after all, he had heard enough. To him all symbolism — all private refinement and explaining away of doctrine — seemed, immediately, futile: you either belonged to the organization by faith in its plainly expressed principles — or you didn't.

And he didn't.

§ 7

For the gift of faith that Ivins purred about had not come back to Felton in answer to his prayer.

He was none of those who wage on the fields of their brains the savage war between belief and unbelief. It was not that anything within him argued against his religion; it was that nothing could argue against his denial. The thing was just there: not an intellectual process — he was not an intellectual man; you can't make a man intellectual merely by giving him an education. What John had was an instinctive growth of negation developed, he had just discovered, to the paralyzing degree of an inability any longer to assent.

Was this what Alice Averell meant when, that day in the mountains, she said she didn't believe in him?

From his inconclusive talk with Stewart, he walked far out of town, alone. In the distance, the river curved like a silver sickle around the base of a tall hill, dark green with a heavy mantle of pine; overhead, the sky retained its cloud-

less blue of summer, but on the hills nearby the gum-trees were red, the oaks turning yellow. Across a neighboring field a flock of crows winged their solemn way; autumn's tang was in the air. Nobody in sight on the roads or near the farmhouses: he moved uninterrupted with his questionings.

Well, he had long ago denied the sacerdotal theory of the episcopate; lately he had denied the episcopate's usefulness. And he remained within the Episcopal Church.

Ought he to leave it?

The doctrine of the Virgin Birth was, for instance, as far as he could determine, a fundamental precept of every Christian sect. And Felton couldn't believe that doctrine.

Ought he to close the door of all Christianity behind him?

He recalled what he had once said to Cameron. John blushed for it.

But that which had then happened to Cameron precisely rose as a deterrent to Felton today. Untrained — a failure:

"Naebody wants an ex-meenister."

Grigg said so, too.

And John was in debt to begin with.

Big men might dream of going out and starting free churches of their own — what they called liberal churches. They never succeeded. Besides, John possessed no false conceit of his powers; he could barely retain that parish-church which had come to him ready-made.

"I wonder," he thought, turning into a footpath that led from the main road through a little forest of white pine and hemlock — "I wonder if doubt weakens character. I wonder if doubt's a weakness. Atheists can be strong — there's Grigg. But I wonder if sceptics, or half-way men can ever — "

Felton was not accustomed to that type of argument.

His mother —

None of those other fellows at the Ministerial Association believed — really, burningly — and yet they hung on where they were, tooth and toenail.

Under the trees, and standing, he prayed again — to something. He could not remember, if he had ever heard it, that this was the position for prayer decreed by the undivided Church and still adhered to by the remnant of that Church; and he did not pray for faith this time. He prayed:

"Show me a way out — show me!"

Always heretofore there'd been a way out. Or around.

Perhaps it was simply ethics, as Edgar Katz had intimated. Was it ethics? Faith must sometimes fail in works and begin all over — faith could be judged by faith combined with works — but a code of ethics must be judged by none save the utilitarian standard. John had never been one to seek gossip or long retain it when it came to him; but he did recall enough authenticated talk about Katz, and a few men like him, to dismiss the futility of any mere decalogue of decorum.

And yet — a way 'round!

There always used to be one.

There always had to be.

§ 8

No, not always.

The second prayer wasn't answered, either — or so it then seemed — and Felton wasn't clever enough to think of anything for himself, nor did his books, which were all downright books, persuade him against his repugnance to that loophole through which, for some souls, passes the Symbolic Interpretation of Religion. He had no right to remain in the organization, but he couldn't afford to get out — so he would stay.

John went home and sat down to the composition of three entirely conventional sermons on the Apostles' Creed.

§ 9

He shut himself in the house, visible only to Sally and seen by her only for hurried intervals at table. He spent little time in bed and nearly all the time in his study. He was going to write the whole trio of expositions that week, giving one to each paragraph of the Creed as the Prayer-Book divides it.

For the first time during his rectorship, he denied himself to visitors and omitted making his parochial calls: fortunately, there was no serious illness in the parish, and nobody was to be baptised, married or buried — the Bishop was reported rather ill, therefore temporarily unannoying. The choir doubtless continued its internecine strife; the guilds probably went on squabbling: Felton didn't interfere. The ever-worried Sunday School Superintendent bore, as was his weekly custom, his troubles to the rectory: they did not pass gatekeeper Sally. Debts pressed: John would not even open the envelopes containing the bills.

"They say," said Sally, bringing in a breakfast, "that the men down to the Raymond mills are askin' higher wages, an' they say they'll strike if they don't git them."

"Oh," murmured Felton, his cup to his lips, his brown eyes intently focussed on a pile of notes beside him. ("'God the Father' . . . ")

"I don't see fer why Mis' Litchfield stays off so long anyways. Leavin' in the middle of the hunt fer her husband's murderer was bad enough — "

"Um," John grunted, without comprehending. "'Born of the Virgin' . . . ")

"An' they say the Catholics' Sacred Heart Solidarity, or some such club, 's givin' a five-hundred party next Wednesday to raise money for a new altar: dollar a seat an' two hun'erd dollars' worth o' prizes. If that ain't gamblin', I'd like to know what is."

("'Rose again from the dead' . . . ")

"They got the cash for that there font las' year by a reg'lar lot'ry —"

"I'm busy," said Felton.

But he didn't give these sermons to Cameron to type.

§ 10

During the delivery of the first, John wouldn't look at his congregation, to which, he however observed, his expensive advertisement in the *Star-and Post* hadn't materially added: he looked from the unilluminated brown patch that was Courtie's memorial in the south transept to the brown patch that was Celeste's Late Gothic Archangel in the north. He simply armored his soul, and went through with his job — and when that service was over, he did not appear at the church door to offer his "goodbye and come again."

The general result was so far from an achievement that next Sunday he tried harder. He had gone over his manuscript and inserted a few poetical quotations, which he knew he would read well. He even tried, without any luck, to summon back his long-lost gift of phrase and fire. When at last he went into the pulpit, he recalled the ultimate resource of the orator; disdain of his audience.

This was well enough at first. The snow-drift of Judge Averell's hair — was it getting a bit thin? — no longer looked impressive; his wife's resemblance to the ninth child of Maria Theresa became entirely spurious:

"'His only Son our Lord.' Not in the human sense, nor

yet as we all, by our sponsors in Baptism, are made the children of God . . . "

Well, anyhow, here were the familiar lights, the familiar pews before him. It was even rather comforting to know that, behind him, Irma Olin and Mrs. Erdman were glaring at each other in the old familiar way:

" 'Born of the Virgin Mary.' A mystery. What is a mystery? It is something that — "

And then Felton became conscious of Grigg's bald head cocked above a light tweed suit — and more embarrassingly conscious of the face of Gee-Gee Hornaday, equine, coldly enigmatic. After that, though John staggered through his ordeal, he knew not only that what he said was " in a tongue not understanded of the people " — it wasn't, and never had been, understood by himself — he knew that they all were as bored as he was, and that Hornaday added to indignant boredom a more or less active sense of the preacher's real position.

§ 11

Hornaday, indeed, thrust his long jaw, at the end of a long neck, in at the vestry-room door just as Felton got his surplice over his head.

" Well? " said John.

" M'you told me you were goin' to cut down your personal expenses," said the vestryman. " Did you cut 'em? "

He closed the door without waiting an answer.

§ 12

It was worse at the rectory, when John got there. Sally was waiting for him:

" Mr. Felton, I've brewed you a pot of mild tea an' put a drop of that there brandy in it. At church tonight I thought you didn't seem so well."

The telephone rang:

"That you, Felton old dear? . . . Grigg talkin'. I just wanted to let you into somethin' I overheard at church a few minutes ago, after the service. Hornaday and the Judge and one or two others of that potty vestry of yours were talkin', and I heard Gee-Gee say that, what with expenses what they are, and attendance and collections so small, and me bein' such a heavy creditor of St. John's property and needin' a bit of ready cash — well, that he thought they ought to lower your salary. Of course, I'll not press my bally little claims more than I have to, but I thought I'd let you know, as a friend, you know, the way the wind was blowin'. Don't let it make you feel more Mondayish tomorrow than usual, only . . . "

Then kindly-intentioned Ikey Rosenbaum called up:

"Meester Felton, I vanted to congratulate you on your sermon dis evenin'. It was chust that old style doctrine I believed efferbody'd forgot: it made me feel so young ag'in! 'Course I neffer was a Christian, and I'm a Christian Scientist now, but I do like to hear the t'ings I used to hear when I was a young feller yet."

John sat down at his desk with his head in his hands. In the waste-basket beside him lay, where he had thrown it, the manuscript of that evening's sermon. Before him lay its successor, the last of the series.

Was there no way out — no way' round?

He might, unless there was and he discovered it — might as well throw this third sermon right now where the second waited. He might —

For a third time the telephone rang.

At first he did not mean to answer it. But it was insistent, and it is almost impossible not to answer a telephone.

"Mr. Felton? "

Had he gone crazy, or was that precise utterance, that throaty voice —

"Yes? At the 'phone."

"This is Celeste — Celeste Litchfield — and I want you" — so like another time, and yet in tone so unlike! — to come to my house, please, the very first thing in the morning!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

§ 1

"I'VE been waiting for you."

Evidently. Although she received him in that breakfast-room with it's wide view of silver river and pine-hooded heights beyond, the cloth had been removed from the intimate table: this day Celeste had not risen late.

The first thing John noted about her was that she wore colors: she wore, in fact, a smart *rouille*-colored jacket, with a brief pleated skirt of the same shade, and stockings which a Paris salesgirl ecstatically pronounced "married" thereto. As his hostess gave him a hand whereof the magenta finger-nails glistened, his heart bounded at her steady clasp: here at last was an ally again.

"I hadn't any idea you were coming home."

"Neither had I — until a week ago. That's what I want to talk about, in a minute. I guess you've breakfasted; but how about some coffee?"

At each side of her round, close-cropped head, a wisp of the bobbed hair curved forward over the ears, caressing its saffron cheek; the effect, thus making its bow to Doncaster, was intentionally Spanish. But all else about Celeste was unchanged; her black brows, her dark, yet brilliant, eyes, her strong white teeth and painted mouth were as he liked best to remember them; and her stocky figure — Mrs. Litchfield's sole, and that inevitable, defiance of the mode — her almost blunt good-nature, especially her air of competent strength in this house which itself suggested every security:

these things somehow gave him courage. No more that sense of meeting her for the first time: somehow, she was an old and steadfast friend.

"Nothing, thanks. I'd begun to think you'd never come; I was afraid you'd deserted us."

"Refuse something? You're a queer minister! Sit down, anyhow. And of course I'd come back: Doncaster is home, after all."

They sat, not opposite each other, but as they had sat that Sunday morning on which, little as he surmised it then, he was to give her Communion.

"In the first place, I know you think it was something about Courtie brought me back." Her voice lowered a little, and grew a little solemn. "I can see you do."

John flushed. He had surmised —

"Well, it wasn't. I'm not often beaten; but when I am, I don't fool myself about it. I loved my husband, Mr. Felton, but I long ago gave up hoping ever to find out who killed him. There are some things people can't ever get to the bottom of, and this is just one of them."

"I'm sorry, but it does seem so."

She lit a cigarette. "I'm not sure whether I am or not. Courtie was a dear fellow, and I'll always think of him that way, but resisting one kind of temptation wasn't his forte. Sometimes I think it's just as well for his memory not to have a trial in court that would bring out why he was murdered."

Incongruously, it passed through Felton's mind: Alice, in these circumstances, would never have taken that practical view, and certainly, had she taken it, would never have said so. But, for many months now, Alice, once his *vardyvle*, had survived only as the faintest wraith.

"I am sorry!"

"Oh, no: I'm very fond of him, only I mean being away

and looking back, I don't pretend he was a saint." She blew a spiral of gray smoke between pursed lips. "Now I'm going to be polite: before I get down to my business, tell me all the town gossip. I only bowled in last night; Judge Averell's almost the single soul who ever wrote to me from here — the Judge and Pennington — that's my mill-superintendent, you know — and the Judge did it because, being poor Courtie's executor, he had to: he was about as newsy as a credit department. Nobody sent me a paper, and that made me so angry I wouldn't subscribe. — You never even dropped me a picture-postcard.

Felton smiled. "I wish I had." He wished suddenly that he had written her everything about his dire difficulties with Meeker and Hornaday, and it was pleasant to wish it.

"I'll forgive you. What's been going on in Doncaster?"

"Nothing." He told her at some length, but he couldn't yet bring himself to give voice to his own troubles.

"Did Dora Zalokostas ever come back?"

"No."

"Haven't heard anything about her?"

"Nothing." John almost felt his conscience accusing him. "Her father didn't seem to want to talk to me. He kept out of my way — or, at least, he was so crazy in his talk, I kept out of his."

"That's funny. He's a nice sort of man."

"He seemed to think I could have done something."

Celeste bent forward, her dark brows contracted over clouded eyes. "Dora's one of the few people I've worried about lately. Perhaps if I'd treated her differently, she wouldn't have run away. And it's an easy bet what sort of life she's run away to. I thought I was right then: but do you think it was my fault?"

"It couldn't have been. Remember what you did for her: giving her that good job — taking her up — getting her out

of that foreign church of hers and into ours — and at the last, the money! It's morbid to blame yourself."

"I suppose Tom Averell's gone to the dogs — or married Justine Dinwiddie and both have gone to the dogs?"

"No, he hasn't; he's gone to work, somewhere out of town. The Judge sent him so he wouldn't marry. Tom wasn't such a bad egg, Mrs. Litchfield, and Justine, for all the talk that keeps going on about her, is really a mighty fine girl."

A brass ash-tray stood on the table at Celeste's elbow; she extinguished her cigarette in the tray, bending over it. "Are you in love with Justine?"

To John returned his old boyish laugh, for two years forgotten. "Not a little bit. If I could arrange it — if I could haul 'round the Judge and get you to give Tom a marrying-job — I'd bring him and Justine together tomorrow."

"Well, perhaps you're right. It's all too long ago for me to care much. We'll see what we can do about it later on. There are a lot of things like that I want to do here; I want to be of some use to Doncaster. I did hear one thing though from home while I was abroad: I heard the Bishop was sick. Is he better?"

She had come to it now. Impulse seized control of Felton. "I don't know, and to tell you the truth, I don't much care!"

"That isn't right." She studied the rector. "Everybody knows the Bishop's a nagger. Has he been after you?"

And then it was easy. When she drew her chair closer to him, John poured out the lengthy story of his woes. It fairly rushed from his lips, and he felt an increasing lightness as it went. Meeker —

"Don't worry about the Bishop, Mr. Felton. He's all right at bottom, and, anyway, I'll fix him."

Hornaday —

"Piff!"

The sermons: "And they're no good. I've somehow got more liberal opinions than I used to have, and — "

On that topic this was as far as he could just then go. She, however, sent it packing.

"You've broadened, of course. We all have. I have, myself. Nobody but human cabbages stand still, and there are a lot too many of them in St. John's: we'll have to get some animal life into them. The congregation's small? My people don't go? I'll see about that as soon as I straighten out what brought me back in such a hurry. Don't you bother. You go right ahead: don't you bother." Her eyes glowed; her cheeks went red. Putting aside, thus, her personal cares, she was, he told himself, splendid in her defense of him and in her heartening promises of help. "You're known all over the diocese — and outside it, too — to be the hardest working clergyman Bishop Meeker has. And that's what counts in the long run: hard work!"

She could do these things for him, this capable woman. A woman of her word, she would do them! John was joyous, but, remembering how much more false than she guessed his position really was, he made a wry mouth, which drew the dimples from his cheeks. "It must be a very long run then, for it hasn't counted much for me so far."

"Just wait. Lowered? We'll have your salary raised at the next vestry-meeting. I'm on the notes of three of our vestrymen, and two-thirds of them owe me favors." She crossed her legs and tapped her knee. "And another thing: I got this from the Judge last night, as soon as I arrived. I sent for it." Celeste pulled a paper from the breast of her *rouille*-colored jacket and held it toward him: that confounded promissory paper given to Courtie! "I don't forget much, but I'm sorry to say I had forgotten this till I got home, and then something — I don't know what — reminded me. Judge Averell never did tell me half of what he ought

to have. I'm going to fire him today and take back the estate work myself — what's left of it. Well, that's that."

She tore the note across and across and flung its fragments on the floor.

Something had hold of John's heart. "Mrs. Litchfield, you mustn't — "

"Why not?" She met him with smiling boldness and the old, familiar downward sweep of her right arm with its extended fingers. "And, anyhow, it's done now."

"But I do owe — "

"Mr. Felton, I sent for you to help me. I've been a heap patient, listening to your troubles. Now will you please shut up and listen to mine?"

What else could he do?

"But at least I've got to thank — "

"If you feel you must, don't."

"I mean I want to!"

"We'll consider it done. Now, please listen."

He had to.

It was about that trouble at the Raymond mills, which, he thought, Sally — or somebody — had mentioned. A big order had come in, and, consequently, the men wanted double-time pay for the necessary overtime work. The situation was grave; the superintendent had cabled; that was why Celeste was unexpectedly here:

"Generally, I don't need anybody's help in these things — won't take it. But I've been away for so long, and working-people have such short memories that mine have almost forgotten me — and they hate my superintendent: I hate him myself. Still, if we pay them what they want, we won't make a red cent of profit on the order. We've been running behind — and the company's never passed a dividend since my father turned it into a stock concern."

Then Felton had his inspiration. Was it she that inspired

him? Why not? He had found it — found it! Rather, she had shown it to him: *she was his Way 'Round.* He burned with hope and gratitude.

"How much could you concede them — the men?"

"Fifty percent. of what they ask. But Pennington says they won't take it."

John smiled. Unconsciously, he threw back his broad shoulders. "Has he tried?"

"He waited for me. He says they'll strike — except the Greeks and Russians."

Anyhow, Felton believed that there rushed home to him his old power over words, which meant a power over men. He could feel it: a sure miracle. And he owed this woman everything. Could he —

It was miraculous. An hour ago, he would have found it impossible to believe in himself and yet here he was triumphantly confident. He could! He knew — in the face of all his failures, he knew he could!

"I might hold a noon-hour open-air service out at the mills. I've often thought about it. And then, in my sermon — just a short sermon — if they take to it, I might — Would you want me to?"

"That's what I was going to suggest," said Celeste. "Something like that. It isn't as if they weren't well paid already — as if there was any hardship among them. You know — everybody knows —"

She was right. It was notorious — it was the superintendent's and the minor shareholder's despair that she coddled her employes.

"I do know," said John.

"Only it wouldn't look well for me to remind them of my own good points," Celeste concluded. "And Pennington would only make things worse if he tried it."

A maid entering — the capped and aproned maid who,

red eyed, had admitted Felton on the morning after Courtie's murder — announced:

"There's somebody on the 'phone from the mills, Mrs. Litchfield. There's been an accident."

§ 2

She came back from the telephone — Celeste — oddly white under her saffron powder.

"I'm going there, of course. I always do, when I'm in town. And — isn't it awful? — it's Dora's father."

"I'll go with you," said John. "Perhaps I can help."

§ 3

Zalokostas had been taken home. At the door of the tenement, as they stepped out of the Litchfield Rolls-Royce, they encountered the mill-surgeon, leaving. He was a mild man with a pink face.

"Mrs. Litchfield? I didn't know you were back."

"You know it now." Celeste shook hands quickly. "What about Nick?"

The surgeon shrugged resignedly. "Spine fractured and other internal injuries. He fell down the shaft of that freight elevator on the south side. It was his own fault, though. He'd taken away the removable railing himself, against Pennington's orders, to load up easier. It was plain contributory negligence: I've got his deposition; you needn't be afraid of damages —"

"I'm not," said Celeste. Then she added: "It's the man I'm thinking about, not the money."

"The man's dying, Mrs. Litchfield."

§ 4

Help? John didn't in any way belong here. He knew that the instant he crossed the threshold of the second of the two Zalokostas rooms. On a sagging bed lay the victim, his bristling gray hair and grizzled moustache just as Felton had seen them last; but the skin was ashen above his high cheekbones, and his eyes were closed.

Incense — there was a cloud of it from knee-height to ceiling. At the farther side of the bed, her silvered head resting thereon, knelt a fragile old woman: Mrs. Zalokostas, to be sure, though her face was mercifully hidden. And here, clad only in black cassock and chasuble, stood that bearded visionary, Father Dimitri: he stood between the bed and a deal table on which reposed an open vessel containing grains of wheat, rather mouldy, and an empty shrine-lamp before an ikon — an awkward ikon, John thought — and some tapers. Five or six frightened housemates, the women weeping, clove to the walls.

Celeste, head up, but gaze suffused, walked between priest and patient:

"Hello, Nickie. I'm awfully sorry."

Until she spoke, John had felt, reluctantly, rather shocked at her intrusion. But then the dying man's eyes opened — sad, sunken eyes — and they actually changed to glad eyes.

"You come?" The voice was husky, but it was pleased. "I wan' tell you somet'ing: you good 'oman."

"What?" She put her hand on his forehead; her magenta-tipped fingers smoothed back his rough hair. "Oh, I'll take care of the wife, Nickie. Natalie'll never have to work again." The woman kneeling on the other side of the bed raised a wrinkled face. "You know Mrs. Kerenko's never had to, nor Mrs. Mavromichales. Just you tell me if there's anything else I can do for you."

Without movement, Zalokostas looked beyond Celeste to Father Dimitri.

"Dora — " said Nicephoros, and stopped.

"I'll find her and bring her here — somehow."

"Mis' Litchfield, I won't live that long. But " — they all believed in her — "for t'e *kedeia* — t'e fun'ral? "

"Sure," said Celeste. She blinked back tears.

John, with some vague idea of being of some help, after all — and with an intense desire to help — took a step forward. But just then — from the table on which, now, six or seven candles glowed — Father Dimitri, mild no longer, made a gesture intended to put both Celeste and Felton temporarily aside, and began, in a queer, high sort of sing-song voice — an hypnotic voice:

"Blessed is our God, now an' always an' unto de ages of ages — Amen. O, Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us! "

Nicephoros Zalokostas, it seemed, had become an American citizen and wanted to receive the last rites of his Church that he was likely to get on this earth by way of the language of his adopted land. . . .

Felton glanced at Celeste. She nodded an answer. Together they left the tenement while the priest's voice droned on and on:

"Do T'ou, de same Lord, receif alzo wid T'y wonted tenter love toward mankind, dis T'y servant, Nicephoros, who repentet him of his sore transgressions, regartin' not his trespasses. For T'ou art our Got, who hast commantet dat we forgive, even unto seventy times seven, t'ose who fall into sin. For as is T'y majesty, so also is T'y mercy, an' unto T'ee all glory, honor and worship . . ."

It was a strange thing, faith — strange and rather magnificent, and certainly comforting. Enviable. Perhaps when one came to this poor Greek's pass —

§ 5

"I'll put out a call for Dora on the radio," said Celeste. "I'll start it tonight."

"That's very fine of you," said John. "But won't it be expensive?"

She turned on him with sudden sharpness. "It may be a lot more expensive than you think, Mr. Felton — but, for Heavens sake, don't talk like our mill-doctor!"

§ 6

The call went out. But before it went, Nicephoros Zalokostas died.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

§ 1

JOHN, however, had at least seen his chance of escape. It was simple, but it was wonderful. It was this:

If he made good with the workers, if he built a bridge and conducted them across it, back to Celeste, why he might also have constructed a means of passage over the gulf of his own troubles. When the right time came, he might ask her for one favor more, and so walk out of the Church and into a position — though doubtless small, to begin with — on the executive staff of the Raymond Mills.

It was not too fanciful — it wasn't fanciful at all: he felt his power to move men returned, and he knew her capacity for gratitude. It wasn't self-seeking, either. Oh, it couldn't happen all at once! There must be a period in which to strengthen and increase her trust in his usefulness — a period of preparing the minds of his congregation, too, so that there clung no dust of unseemly haste to the skirts of his departure. Having helped her on this occasion, he would again and again be consulted, and again and again help; the parish would hear of it, become accustomed to it: when he left, there could be no scandal about unbelief — he would have quite naturally progressed from one job to another. In any event, the worst that people might say of him was that he had lost, not faith, but interest in active ecclesiastical ministration; meanwhile, Celeste, if she made up her own mind to such a course, was not the person to care what anybody said — she was mistress in the mills.

Slow — but it might be done. Could be. Must be.

He thanked his God.

It seemed to John that, given this chance, he was given nearly all else he had lost throughout the slow and unobserved process during which he lost his faith. He knew he would succeed with the men tomorrow; it was years since he had held that sense of power — or, more accurately, since that sense of power had held him — but there was no mistaking it, once it was there: he'd succeed; he'd be doing something in return for Celeste Litchfield, who'd done this wonderful thing for him — and he'd be doing good to the mill-hands, too. He'd be getting them a fifty percent increase: if religion wasn't to make people more comfortable, what was it for?

§ 2

"Good luck to you," said Celeste, and pressed his extended hand.

Felton, his surplice already donned, was leaving her in the otherwise emptied mill-office — a grimy room, with a row of the kind of desks one has to stand up to, along two walls; with a pair of the kind of desks one has to sit down to, in the centre; with uncovered typewriting-machines and adding-machines and day-books and order-books and everything else that such a place ought to have. Except clerks: the clerks had joined the manual laborers in the big mill yard just outside, on which, from here, opened a door and should have opened one window that was now, however, shuttered.

"Good luck to you," said John.

"Yes," she admitted, "that's what it will come to."

"Or else a passed dividend?"

She wrung his hand. "There's not going to be any 'or else'!"

He had never attempted such a thing before, but he was already exultant.

"Now if you'll just follow me, Mr. Felton," said Pennington, the superintendent, from the doorway: he didn't approve of these goings-on and didn't attempt to conceal his disapproval.

§ 3

A sort of pulpit had been erected in the sooty "yard." All around it the mills towered, their smoking chimneys sending down a fine mist of coal-dust, the deposit of which was visible on John's white surplice before he had taken the six necessary paces in front of the mass of human beings, rows ten and twenty deep, which almost filled the grassless compound.

"It's a tough outfit," whispered knotty-browed Pennington, by way of encouragement.

"Where are the leaders?" whispered Felton.

"There — right in front of you when you preach, they'll be: Dick Turner's the one with the brick-red hair, and the fellow with an eye out's Hicky Durkin."

The whole affair was to be conducted from that makeshift pulpit close beside the office's shuttered window. Felton ascended the rude steps.

"We'll sing," he said, "if you please, the hymn that's printed on the leaflets Mr. Pennington has distributed. It's one everybody knows: 'Onward, Christian Soldiers.' Come on, now — everybody. I'll begin."

Beating time with his arms, about which the long sleeves of the surplice flapped, he courageously took up that triumphant air in his excellent singing-voice, a baritone: his first glance over his audience — and the important psychological effect of standing at a height — had brought him the last grain of assurance. Turner's mouth was glum, and Hicky

Durkin's one good eye glowered; but all the rest of the crowd seemed no more than a flock of sheep, true enough to a present leader, but quite ready to follow any new candidate that could prove superiority. They were slow to join in, because of timidity, yet join in they at last did.

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer" —

Felton went through the briefest permissible form — or something briefer than is generally permitted — of Morning Prayer, everybody, throughout, standing. He prayed directly at Hickey and Turner: they wouldn't say "Amen," but soon some of their followers — men behind them, who couldn't see them — said it, even if shamefacedly, when John indicated its appropriateness — after all, a lot of them used to go to St. Alban's — and Felton's tone had now that quality of command which impels an echo.

"Now for a ten minute talk — ten minutes and not a second more. Take out your watches and time me. If I run one word over, let me hear about it right off."

He had no manuscript. He did not even have any notes. A night's rehearsal, under the new impetus, had brought back to him the spirit of the old seminary debating contests — and he loved it and gloried in it.

"One other thing before I commence. (And it's only fair to take time out for this, fellows!) If you think I'm intruding, I want you to pardon it — and go. I don't want you to look at me as if I was a butter-in; and you're not going to lose your lunch-hour through me. Mr. Pennington tells me nobody's been forced to come here; and because I want this service to be a success so that I can hold more of them, I want, right now, anybody who doesn't feel like staying to go away."

He paused. The sound of his voice was good in his ears.

Durkin looked at Turner, but nobody moved. He'd known nobody would!

"Now, then, set your watches! —

"I've got a text from the oldest book of the Old Testament: 'Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for naught? Tell me, what shall thy wages be.'"

He could hear the not-soon-enough choked gasp of them. That was good: his audacity captured their attention at the kick-off.

Before he said it, he knew well what he was going to say; twenty minutes later he could not have repeated it to save his soul. He knew only that he said it over the leaders' heads — the introductory part of it, anyhow — and hard at the men. Brotherhood. Labor and capital interdependent. Partnership. The owner deserving of profit on money invested, the worker deserving of profit on invested energy. Everybody to get something more than he put in — to get it out of the third element, that element of profit created by the junction of the two elements originally and jointly introduced.

It wasn't new, even to this audience: Felton had quite frankly picked it up, here and there, in the course of a night's necessary reading. He was, as has been said, no intellectual, but he had sympathy; he had good will for all concerned; once more, he had again earnestness of purpose, and, above all, he again had gift to phrase, ease of gesture, fire of tone.

The chimney-smoke hid the noonday sky: it didn't matter. Hicky Durkin and Dick Turner were sullen: that was nothing — they wouldn't be so for long; he'd get them yet. The crowd was rising to him; he could feel it, as only your good talker can, and in any real democracy of labor, the leaders are the creatures of the crowd.

"Justice! I'm for justice to both sides."

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There was doubt on those leaders' faces, but they also felt the crowd and were accordingly less morose.

"But I'm for mercy — for kindness, too. And I don't believe — and you don't believe — the kindness ought to be all on one side when the justice has to be on both."

Something like that. He never did remember.

Brotherhood — kindness. He didn't — oh, that was the best part of it! — mention Celeste by name; but he so subtly wrought upon his hearers that every one of them recalled the pension to Mrs. Mavromichales and Mrs. Kerenko — Celeste's thousand-and-one lavish kindnesses completely overbalancing her admittedly equally well-intentioned interferences of a less pleasant type — brought fresh to mind yesterday's wildfire gossip about what was to be done for the widow of Zalokostas, dead through his own fault. Dick and Hicky perceptibly softened: after all, they were local men and had themselves known their employer's favors.

Force — gesture — flame. What Felton said scarcely counted. The pleading of the things just left unsaid — what he adumbrated, and the manner of his speech: these told. Their "Miss Raymond!" They had only forgotten her because she had been away: he recalled her without a seeming intention so to do. And when he saw that he had done it, without straining this note, he dropped it, reverberating in their minds. Hereafter, at the other services, he wasn't going into affairs that were none of his business, but here was their demand, and here were the losses of the mills for the last six months; here, too, were the figures involved in the new order. Kindness — partnership. Did they want an old and honorable concern to spoil its long record by passing a dividend — the concern on which they themselves depended? Well, then — here and now — once and for all — quick — how about accepting fifty percent. of their demands?

§ 4

He'd won. To the utter collapse of Pennington — almost to the collapse of Turner and Durkin, and yet with their approval, John had won. Now, the service over, he was back in the office — still empty but for Celeste — and rolling up his discarded surplice.

She came to him, threading a way among the office-impedimenta. She looked like a young girl — and talked like one:

"I was listening back of that shutter there all the time. Did I get my face dirty from it? I don't care. I knew you'd put it over if you had me to back you — and you did!" Her always throaty voice thrilled; her teeth flashed. "If you'll add preaching like that to work like yours, you'll get anywhere."

"And I believe," said John, glowing and truthful, "you can make me do it every time."

She was panting as if indeed the whole effort had been hers. Though he breathed hard, she breathed harder. And yet she gave him more credit than his modesty could permit; her saffron cheeks turned red once more, her jeweled hands outstretched, a dusky-crimson dream she came on toward him:

"I didn't tell you in advance quite how much it meant to the company — to my father's memory — to me. I just didn't dare! But all the time I knew you'd pull it off. I heard every word: you were wonderful!"

John had reddened, too. More than that: although the dimples worked in his cheeks, something most unpleasant worked in his throat. He was in a sun-bath of triumph — nobody had praised him since — since he didn't know when.

"It was their memory of you that won them over," he however managed somehow to say.

"But I told you I couldn't well have brought that memory

home to them, and nobody else except you could have done it at all." She was close to him now, her whole body visibly palpitant. Their hands met. "You did — you — John!"

Her scarlet mouth kissed him on the lips.

Well, he kissed her. He kissed her there among the ledgers and the day-books and the adding-machines.

§ 5

"There's one thing I've got to tell you right off, dear," she said as he held her hand while the Rolls-Royce purred up the hill.

"There are a hundred thousand things we've got to tell each other," he answered. "Millions and millions! It will take us all our lives. It will take me all my life, anyhow, to tell you how much I love you."

For he did love her; he was quite drunk with love of her. He must have loved her ever so long, and yet — slow brain that he had, he thought — he had only realized it back there in the unromantic office when she bravely kissed him. He knew then that he loved her better than anything else in life, and he knew now how much he needed her and all that she could be to him. He who had — except, of course, in the matter of his mere calf-love for Alice — so meticulously avoided women! He lifted his head and let his regained boyish laughter ripple through the limousine.

"But this," said Celeste, "is something I've got to tell you now. It's about Courtie."

John wondered if he ought to release her hand. But he didn't release it: he held it a little more consciously — that was all. "It doesn't matter — nothing does, now."

"Still, I'm going to say it." She was looking at the driver's unconscious back, her eyes a little sombre. "I don't want to pretend for a minute I wasn't in love with him."

"Of course you were, dear. — " Felton fought down irresolution. "I was rather in love with — with Alice Averell, once."

"Poof, that! " She dismissed it. He breathed easier. "I was in *love* with Courtie. But I don't want to pretend he put much across with me, either. I mean, he wasn't a saint and I knew it."

"You've intimated that already, Celeste." John addressed her by her Christian name for the first time, and joyed in it. "What's the use — "

"Wait a minute. I knew he wasn't a saint, but I did care a lot about him, all the time we lived together, and I'll still always think kindly of him."

"But of course! "

"Do wait a minute. Well, then, I guess some second husbands lose their tempers sometimes and talk about their wives' first husbands to their wives. I don't want you ever to do that, John."

He squeezed her hand. "How can you think I would? "

"You can never be sure, unless you promise." She turned to him, her dusky beauty heightened by an uprush of affection. "I love *you* now and always will, but I want you to give me your word never to repeat anything to me that you know about him — not even when I'm in one of my tantrums." She smiled. "I do have them, you know, sometimes — and I want poor Courtie to rest in peace."

They were entering the grounds about her house; nobody was there, and the chauffeur couldn't see. She put her arms around Felton's neck.

"I promise."

"Then that's the last of that."

He hoped so. "Kiss me," he said.

"Don't you think you might kiss me? "

"But," John teased, "you did kiss me first — down at the mill."

"It's not very gallant of you to remind me."

"I loved it."

"I meant you only to think it was a kind kiss of gratitude," Celeste avowed in her husky undertone.

"I soon took the false-face off that," laughed Felton.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

§1

ONLY one drawback he saw, but that one decidedly irksome: this happiness assured his escape from the Church, yet still further postponed that release. His plan for manumission was not among the earliest of those thoughts which ran to him after Celeste and he discovered their love: love was enough. But it did return at last, and he saw immediately that common decency must retard its mention. He couldn't now say: "I'm glad you love me; give me a job." He couldn't say later: "Because I'm your husband I want you to give me a job." A lover today, a husband tomorrow, he must prove his merely business worth much more than had he been a simple friend. It wasn't for her money that he loved her, and he would do nothing to encourage the suspicion that it was.

Well, then — wait. Wait for as much as two years, perhaps. One, anyhow. At least the material vexations at St. John's would be ended straightway. — Wait and help.

Their engagement — Celeste characteristically announced it at once — proved almost too much for Doncaster; but, on the whole, the town approved. At the declaration, Dentist Colfax resembled President Coolidge being asked a leading question, and grocer Slocum said "Hey?" three times before he could believe it; Mrs. Averell seemed somewhat reserved — she was thinking, it might be, of Alice — Sally looked grim and remarked that she guessed, then, she'd not

be wanted no more; the ministers wagged their heads when Felton wasn't with them:

"Pretty soft!" drawled Pastor Weir. "Pre-ty soft!"

"I'm told," said the Rev. Owen Ivins — "naturally, I don't know; but I'm told — that the attachment dates back considerably — very considerably."

Still, Ernest Grigg emitted heartily his version of the proper form of London congratulations and declared he had long expected this event. Mr. Rosenbaum made a graceful reference to Celeste's income; the Judge raised high the snowdrift of his head, saying the correct thing in his best ponderous phrase, and Hornaday, poking out his long chin, stopped John at the entrance to the post-office:

"From what I hear, I figger you won't be so sot on gittin' that wage-raise now."

All thought of salary-reduction, or any further opposition to Felton in his capacity of rector, had retreated before the formidable reënforcements he received by his betrothal to the last of the Raymonds. It would never advance again, unless Hornaday were openly flouted by the preaching of heresy.

Meanwhile, Celeste, although she received no answer to her radio-call for Dora, attended the funeral of Nicephoros, sending a large wreath ahead of her, and, like the others there, stood up — quietly refusing the seat the sexton offered — throughout the almost interminably long burial service in the shabby church with onion-shaped turrets. She even held a taper. As soon as burial had been made, she drove to Judge Averell's office and arranged a pension for Mrs. Zalokostas.

Nor was that all, by half. During this first week of the engagement, her workmen being once more, as she described it, in line, she arranged that the former congregation of St. Alban's should enroll at St. John's: this guaranteed both a

church attendance and a Sunday School membership of splendid proportions. Then she ironed out the difficulties between the guilds by plain threats, social to the Ladies', economic to St. Martha's; and she made peace in the choir by telling Mrs. Erdman and Irma Olin that, if they didn't behave, they would both be discharged and better voices imported from New York with Raymond money. It was all not exactly as Alice would have done it, but it was tremendously effective.

Hard as John had always worked, he worked harder now. Celeste's example spurred him, success spurred him, love spurred him. So long as he remained in the Church, he would give it of his best. He was happy; he was so happy that he was not worried over his private attitude toward the faith — didn't discuss it with his fiancée — put it out of mind against the day when he should be able to point to things accomplished of him at the mills and, telling his sincere unbelief, go to the mills in all honesty. He could look forward, positively, to next Sunday evening's sermon on the Apostles' Creed, the concluding sermon of the series, with gladness; he overhauled and amended his manuscript — got it by heart. He was going to make Hornaday sit up, as he had won the mill-workers. He could, in fine, be sorry that Meeker was ill when the Bishop telegraphed:

> "On my bed of pain, I have heard from dear Mrs. Litchfield the cheering news of your engagement and I heartily congratulate you. I pray God to bless your forthcoming union. I am writing her today that if Heaven spares me, I shall most gladly fulfill her prettily expressed wishes and officiate at the ceremony."

§ 2

"Look here," said Celeste, after John had dined with her on Wednesday evening at the house on the hill, "you need a vacation."

Felton leaned toward her across the candle-lit table with its shimmer of silver and delicate napery. "I never felt better in my life."

He looked it. But she shook her dark head.

"That's all right; you've been having a hard time. My mother's family — I guess you know it — was from Martinique: they were all pure Bouches du Rhône people, but they'd lived for ever so long in the West Indies when she was born there. Well, mother was an only child, and there was a little property — not much: a small sugar plantation. Now, I get regular reports about it from my agent in Fort-de-France, but they've been kind of skimpy lately. I want somebody I know to run down there and look the proposition over. There's a sailing from New York on Monday morning. You could leave here by the late Sunday night train. I wish you'd go; I've booked passage."

The amazing woman! "Celeste. I — I can't!"

"Why not?" She reached over to him her glistening hands.

"My parish engagements."

One by one she demolished those.

"Then the services at the mill. I promised the men —"

"I'll get a substitute. The Episcopal minister at Americus, is crazy about that sort of thing."

"What will the vestry say?"

"You leave St. John's vestry to me."

"But —"

"It's for me you're going."

"It's so soon."

She looked into his brown eyes. "You know that's the way I do things — soon."

"My dear, I've just found you — after all these years: I don't want to leave you yet." He didn't. It was true that he had never been beyond the borders of his own country, nor journeyed far within them: there was the lure of travel — but he really would have preferred to stay near Celeste.

"You'll see," she said, "a good deal of me, most likely, before one or other of us dies."

"Never enough — and I'll be leaving my work here again almost right away." Celeste thought a long engagement silly at their age: they were to be married next month. "I'll be leaving it for a — wedding-trip."

"This is a business one."

"You said it was a vacation."

"It'll be a change for you, but it'll be work, too. Honestly, honey, I need you to go down there. Besides, I'm going to be frightfully busy for the next few weeks, and away most of the time, in New York, shopping — too busy to have you around: a woman can't get married without some clothes to wear." She raised one of his hands to her lips and kissed it; then, instantly, she was practical again: "You've got administrative ability; you've proved it, and you were so wonderful with those men down at the mill, I know you can do this for me. Now, wait a minute: I'll get you all the papers and show you just what there is to find out."

§ 3

So the closing sermon on the Apostles' Creed was a triumph. As he couldn't succeed before, so he knew that now he couldn't fail. Because the church would be full? Because he was in love? Because everything — save one thing — was going well? John didn't know the reason — and

didn't bother to seek it. It was enough that he had recovered his gift of persuasion: he would never let it go again.

> "I believe in the Holy Ghost: The Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body: And the Life Everlasting."

Since Felton had to go through with it, he rejoiced in going through with it splendidly. It was a good deal to cover in one sermon, but he covered it eloquently, and half of Doncaster was there to hear the man that had just become engaged to Celeste Raymond Litchfield — and to regard that lady, who sat, not in a front pew, yet, as Rosenbaum put it, "pretty vell forward chust the same."

§4

There was but one dissonant note to John's departure for New York, that night, *en route* to Fort-de-France. The congregation congratulated him — he was back at the church-door on this occasion — even Sally, who had punctiliously packed his bags with everything he wouldn't need and inserted a patent medicine that prevented seasickness, crackled her parchment cheeks into a satisfied smile when he returned to the rectory; and Celeste stopped there and came into his study and admired his books, and said she'd bid him good-bye here, because she never liked to go to the station to see anybody off that she really cared about: she kissed him again and again, almost desperately she kissed him, and he, with his boyish laugh, told her that she was as bad as Sally — who undoubtedly crouched at a key-hole — behaving exactly as if he were trying to climb to the moon by aeroplane.

But at the station, whither John, ticket already bought, went alone, Cameron waited. And Cameron was in that

stage of drunkenness where one overemphasizes the virtue of plain-speaking.

" I've been wantin' to see ye."

On him the arc-lights in that high shed shone bluely. There had been an Indian Summer shower: the ex-parson's hard hat dripped; he button-holed Felton by the trackside, and the train was not due for nearly five minutes.

" To see me? "

The fellow's face had grown chalky, with a spattering of red-and-yellow eminences, and he smelled frightfully. The attendant travellers, fortunately few and mostly strangers, stared: Cameron saw them, but didn't care.

" Ou-aye. I've heard a' your discoor-rses on the Cr-reed, sittin' modestly where you couldna see me. And I'd no sooner heard the fir-rst than I kenned for why ye didna gie me the lot to type for ye."

He grinned down from his superior height. John tried to pull away. Impossible.

The former dominie pursued:

" These folk who ca' themselves Modernists — if so be they admit our Lord was super-rnatural, they'll hae Him as leetle so as possible; for bread-butter sake, they gr-rant He was above everyday human nature, but they put Him there in the least super-rnatural way they can compass."

" I hope things are going all right with you," said Felton.

" Ebionites," said Cameron. " D'ye ken the Ebionites? "

" I think, when I was at the seminary — "

" ' This day hae I begotten Thee ': they were early heretics who got around the Incarnation at the Virgin Birth — and juked the Virgin Birth, too — by makin' the Incarnation tak' place at the Lord's baptism: a mere inspeeration, some might call it. Weel, these Modernists are a kind o' Ebionites — only they don't ken it."

" That's very interesting." John looked around the train-

shed uneasily. Perhaps it was better — it was certainly kinder — to humor the man.

" An' ye whine because ye can't fill your chur-rches. D'ye ken why ye can't? It's because ye don't believe what your chur-rches stand for, and because ye know nobody'd feel it necessary to come to chur-rch if ye preached what ye do believe! Those unco brave and outspoken Modernists, the ones that mak' the noise, ye'll note — " Cameron swayed a little — " are a' men as made sure o' their jobs' futures afore they become sae modern. That's a' richt. But what aboot their influence on the puir par-rsons who read their books and are convinced thereby — the puir bodies whose jobs aren't safe if they speak out? Man, most o' the Fundamentalists are stupid-honest; but your camouflaged Modernist-Protestant's the worst Jesuit in the wor-rld. He's got to go where I've gone or stay where he is and lie." The drunkard shot Felton a cynical glance. " And in general he stays."

John's temper snapped its leash. " You're drunk, Cameron. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! "

The effect of that was not, however, what it was intended to be. Cameron tightened his hold on his hearer's lapel, drew himself up to his full height and then thrust his bleared face close to John's.

" Am I and ought I? — And you advised me to leave the chur-rch for no' believin', Rev. Meester Felton! "

" I told you there was probably a way 'round — "

" After-rwards — and one nae honest man could tak'." But he was very drunk: as quickly as John's anger had arisen, so quickly Cameron's subsided. His lips relaxed; his eyes moistened. " Meester Felton, could ye lend me a couple o' dollars? I've got some wor-rk as good as pr-romised from Judge Averell — "

Mercifully, the train came in. John pressed a ten-dollar bill into an eager and dirty palm — and got aboard.

§ 5

Cameron was only drunk —
But was he only drunk?
John was too happy to mind —
But could any happiness endure when one was in a false position?
It wasn't for so very long. — Nobody could ever prove —
But a drunkard had guessed.
The train roared on through the dark. . . .

§ 6

All the time that Felton was away, Celeste was as busy as she had said she would be. She ordered an elaborate trousseau and oversaw the making of much of it. She arranged innumerable business-affairs, the results of her long absence and a provision against her coming honeymoon. At home and office, she resumed and augmented a correspondence interrupted by her stay abroad — lived in a whirlwind of telegrams and long-distance telephone-calls, which last she loved best of all. She took up church-affairs. She paid off the St. John's debts. Her abundant energy carried her to New York — to Philadelphia. She even found time to break one journey for an afternoon's visit to ailing Bishop Meeker. Finally, having easily learned Tom Averell's present address in a nearer city, she walked unannounced into that young gentleman's boarding-house room at six o'clock one evening, when it was pretty certain he would be there.

He was — and so was Justine.

" My God! " said Celeste.

She had come here because, in her happiness, she decided not to believe, after all, the gossip about this girl. John didn't: Celeste wouldn't. And, being happy, she wanted

everybody else to be happy, too. Moreover, although she had never considered herself to blame for Dinwiddie's death, her love made her more tender in regard to so much as she had done against him. She thought, too, that she had misjudged Tom, who'd been no more than a wild boy, and, if Justine had been rude to her — Well, Felton's fiancée wanted to be able to pray with a clean heart: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." She would give Tom, at the Raymond mills, a position sufficiently well-paid to warrant his marriage to Father Brethwald's daughter.

But now —

This shabbily intimate room. A bedroom. Tom, in a too well worn sack-suit, shamefaced: his freckles had faded in the last couple of years, but he was blushing to his tow-colored hair. Justine, seated on that bed's edge in a kimono, smoking a cigarette — which she didn't put down — her violet eyes only rebellious.

"My God!" said Celeste. Neither her French blood nor her continental visits had relaxed the morals inherited from her father.

"Good afternoon," Justine said.

The faded wall-paper — the miserable carpet — the washstand with a cracked pitcher — that bed!

Tom came awkwardly forward. "Mrs. Litchfield!"

"Offer her the chair, Tom. There's only one, Mrs. Litchfield."

He fronted Celeste. "Don't give us away — please."

Then Celeste found something more to utter than a pious ejaculation. "I see I was never wrong about the one of you, and I see it's all true about the other. Give you away? I'll do as I choose about that! The son of a judge and the daughter of a clergyman — a minister! Can you guess what brought me here, Tom Averell?"

"I can," said Justine; "but you mightn't like to hear it."

Celeste tossed her black head and confined her words to Tom. "It was to have a talk with you and offer you a good job in my office."

"Oh!" The young man beamed.

Justine rose.

"That's what it was," Celeste continued. "But if you think I'm going to have a fellow that's — Why, one of the things I was going to do was to show your father he was mistaken about this girl and talk him around into letting you marry her!"

"Marry?" That word expelled the cigarette from Justine's lips — she didn't so much as bother to put a slippered foot on it — and with the cigarette dropped her bravado. Indignation took its place. "But we are married!"

Not until then did Celeste sit down — then she had to. This marriage, though it changed everything, was more surprising than her first diagnosis of the case:

"You are?"

"What did you suppose?"

That is, it would change everything if they were. "Have you got your certificate?"

It was pinned on the inside of Justine's dress, which lay on the tumbledown bureau. "Look as long as you like!" The wife threw the paper.

Beyond doubt. Elkton — they'd eloped down there. But they were married! Celeste was glad again — not exactly sorry for a most natural assumption, yet glad it had been wrong. Her gladness grew when she further studied the document:

"Why, that poor Zalokostas girl's a witness — "

She was the only friend we had that we could trust," said Tom.

"And a good friend," said Justine.

"I'll tell the world she was."

"— and it's dated over two years ago!"

"Yep." The boy was grave in his memories: "And all that time, we had to sneak seeing each other, because of father: he'd have made us starve. Then he got on that we were sneaking something — he didn't guess what — and he sent me away to work, clerking. I'm a good clerk, Mrs. Litchfield: double-entry and all — but I couldn't earn enough to support Jus': so we kept on keeping things dark. It was only once in a while I could beat it back home and meet her at a roadhouse, or some such place, or get her here for a visit on the quiet."

Like most practical women, Celeste loved romance — when it was not illicit. "You poor kids! Why in the world didn't you come to me?"

"You?" Justine's yellow curls shook dangerously; but she was on the point of surrender to this unexpected espousal of her long clandestine cause.

"Well, most of the time you were away, Mrs. Litchfield," said Tom, with more diplomacy.

"All right then." Celeste could stand up again. "I'm going back now, anyhow — and you two are going with me. Put on some clothes, Justine, for Heaven's sake; I can see you've hardly anything on under that kimono. Tom, pack up and let me have your bill here — and write a resignation to your old boss: you've got a new one. Hurry up, now! My car's outside. You'll both sleep at Judge Averell's house tonight, or I'll know the reason why."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

§ 1.

FELTON'S expedition had proved, in most respects, all that he could have hoped for it. He held in mind ruined St. Pierre's picture, old enough now to be beautiful, where Pelée, imperial purple, breathed smoke-spirals to an unremembering sky of azure; but his vision, long narrowed to Doncaster, was cheered by the vividly painted houses, with their multitudinous balconies and green jalousies, of Fort-de-France. The voyage down and up — the rides *à cheval* among Martinique's four hundred mountains, along roads cypress-bordered, through fertile valleys, gutta-percha fields and plantations of sugar-cane — bronzed and quickened him. The business had been merely one requiring tact and patience and a little hard work: enough to justify Celeste in dispatching a personal representative, and to tax that representative's talents of persuasion, yet quite easily accomplished by the renewed John and more than quite flattering to him in its accomplishment. Cameron's parting words? Their drunken speaker had doubtless long since forgotten them. John returned to Doncaster well and, on the whole, not dissatisfied.

"The tired look's gone from your face, dear," said Celeste, as she herself drove him from the station, "and I'm not ever going to let it come back."

His boyish laugh preceded his answer. "As long as I've you." He almost told her then and there of that vague idea about a change of work.

She, however, ran on:

"I've sold my house."

"Sold it?"

"Yes — to Ernest Grigg: they say there's a person in England — ever so much younger than he is. That's Grigg all over. I thought it was better to sell, all things considered."

"All things" meant Courtie. John then understood. "I suppose so."

"We'll begin our life in your dear old rectory. Oh — and listen, John: what do you think" — She was a mere girl again! — "Tom and Justine are married, and Tom's father and mother — I talked to them — don't mind: the Judge did at first, — raised Cain — but he knew he'd have to swallow it when I said I'd given Tom the best office job I had and he and Justine were going to live here."

Celeste told Felton all about it, not sparing the figure which she had cut in the boarding-house. ("I must have looked like a fool; I certainly was one!")

And their own wedding was to be only next week — hers with John. Bishop Meeker had said he would officiate if he had to be carried to the church — he said there was one crippled Catholic cardinal-archbishop who had a papal dispensation to say Mass seated, so why shouldn't he marry two old friends any way he could? John had chosen Grigg for his best man, now the bride-elect announced a triumph: she had talked Mrs. Averell into being matron-of-honor, and the white-haired Judge was to give Celeste away:

"The reception will be at the Garrison House — I thought that was better, too, all things considered; and I suppose you'll give your dinner to Mr. Rosenbaum and Weir and Ivins and the other ushers at the country-club."

She went with Felton into his study, where they had parted, and, when Sally left, his wife-to-be kissed him in the way

that such women as the Celeste Raymonds can kiss: a wonderful woman!

As he held her in his arms, he whispered: "I want to work for you — *you!* Do you know, Celeste, I believe I'll — "

She interrupted, reluctantly withdrawing her body from his embrace:

"Do you see that window over there? "

Out of the study-window, she was pointing to one in the wall of the church. It was the Gabriel-window she had had removed to St. John's north transept from St. Alban's.

"Yes," said Felton:

She took one of his hands in both of hers; she spoke huskily. "Don't think it's silly of me, or kittenish; but the reason I had that put there was because, for ever and ever so long, you've seemed to me just like the angel in that window."

The light being on the wrong side of it, it looked to Felton only a brown smudge.

Wait. Yes, after all, he would have to wait. Wait and help.

§ 2

The morning of their wedding-day dawned clear, even cloudless, and John, although the time for the ceremony was set at 10:30, rose with the sun. While he was splashing in the bath, Sally, belowstairs, heard his laughter — heard him singing:

"I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on! "

"It's just like old times," said Sally, in the kitchen, "when his mother was livin'."

Felton didn't know what he was singing. Very likely, he

didn't know that he was singing at all. But, in his excellent baritone, never nasal at music, he sang:

"So long Thy power has blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have known long since . . . "

§ 3

He came down radiant, and did more than justice to that first-rate breakfast. Sally had taken no end of pains with it: It was the last she was ever to cook for him.

"'Happy's the bride the sun shines on,' she quoted to him; she had carefully prepared her speech: "An' I hope you'll be happy, Mr. Felton, an' — an' God bless you: you've been " — she forgot her text — "a terrible care to me now an' ag'in; but mighty good to me for all that."

It was like old times — or young ones. His hair was smooth and brown, his face was brown and round; and brown and smiling were his eyes. The dimples danced in his cheeks.

"Sally! "

"Yes, Mr. Felton." She came and stood by his chair.

"What do you think of that? "

From the breast-pocket of his new clerical frock-coat, he had taken a jeweler's leather-covered case. With steady fingers he snapped it open.

"Good Lord! " cried Sally.

Inside, on green velvet, reposed a short, but exquisite, necklace of pearls.

"My present to the bride," said John. "Even she hasn't

seen them yet, and I don't want her to see them till after the wedding. But I wanted you to, Sally. I wanted you to see them, first of all." He laid his free hand on that one of her work-hardened hands which rested upon the table, tremulously grasping emptiness. "Because you've been a wonderful help to me all these years, and patient — patient — patient."

Sally Knrahnopfer dabbed her suffused eyes with the corner of her apron. "I ain't so sure about the patience, Mr. Felton. — Are they real?"

"Every one of them."

"Then they must 'a' cost a heap. How'd you ever afford it?"

"I couldn't, but I just did: there are some things you have to. Now, not a word to a living soul!"

"No, sir."

"And, Sally?"

"Yes, Mr. Felton?"

He restored the box to his breast-pocket and searched a waistcoat-pocket. — "Oh, yes, it's all right: I haven't lost the ring. — Now, about you." That had been a question at the back of both their minds: Celeste was to bring her own servants, though where she would put them, John couldn't for the life of him see. Yesterday, however, he had settled at least the Knrahnopfer conundrum by something else that he couldn't afford: a promissory-note of awful proportions to Grigg. "Look here. Here's a sort of deed that Judge Averell drew up for me: Sally, dear, it assures you for life the little amount of money you've been getting in wages from me" . . .

§ 4

He was to walk across the churchyard — he had set his watch by Celeste's, last night — at 10:25, go into the vestry-

room and thence enter the chancel. After his third nervous tour of the rectory — which wouldn't be put in order until he'd left on his wedding-journey, anyhow — he sat down in the study at least an hour and a half before the time appointed for leaving it.

The book-shelves — the now rarely-used tennis-racquet — the forgotten golf-bag in a corner, and on this desk his battered portable typewriter; here the old view of the old graves, and St. John's beyond them —

Oh, well!

Thoughtlessly, he began to thumb a prayer-book that he opened at " the Form of Solemnization of Matrimony ":

> " . . . signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church . . . reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God — "

There was a sound from the window. Looking in at him, as her father had looked two years ago, stood Dora Zalokostas. . . .

§ 5

" I thought I'd come in this way so as not to bother your servant, she must be so busy today."

Somehow he had opened the window, and very easily she climbed in.

" But where — "

She didn't wear a returned prodigal's garb: she wore an entirely modish dress, dark blue with a single streak of crimson running direct from the centre of the low-cut neck-opening to the short skirt's hem. Could this be Dora? Her figure was fuller than it used to be. Her mouth and nose were the Hellenic mouth and nose that he remembered, her

complexion was the same translucent Russ, her eyes were as large and liquid, her hair as fair and soft, as ever; she looked physically well. But she looked also, if quietly sad, at least tranquil.

" — Where," he finished, " did you come from? "

" Home."

" You mean your Doncaster home? "

" Yes. I got in last night."

Felton involuntarily glanced at his watch: an hour and a quarter. " Didn't you know we were looking for you everywhere? " Her composure seemed ill-placed. " The radio — "

" Yes, but I wasn't quite ready. I hope I haven't put anybody to too much trouble."

" You've put Mrs. Litchfield to a great deal of expense — "

" I'm sorry — "

" And your mother, I imagine, to a lot of worry."

" Mother knew — all the time. It was only my father I didn't tell. He found out the first part; and he went on so, I wouldn't let him have my address." On this call, Dora did not clasp her hands; they lay quietly open in her lap as she sat opposite John. " You see, I had a baby — I guess you knew I was going to. Well, she died. Then, somehow, I didn't want to come home till I'd made good — done something for myself — before that, everybody'd done something for me. I thought I'd use the rest of the money Mrs. Litchfield gave me to make myself more useful to her than the business-college made me she sent me to. So I've been using it for that — with some I earned on the side."

She looked at John with the innocent gaze of a Byzantine Saint. His round face grew gentler. " That was very fine of you. I suppose you want me to see if Mrs. Litch — "

" That's not exactly what brought me: there's another

thing. Mother wrote me she couldn't do it, so I must. First of all, Mr. Felton, she says they say there were other men; but there weren't " — Dora's voice flowed calmly on — " and my father knew it; there weren't any others then nor afterwards: only Mr. Litchfield."

John jumped. " Mr. — What are you telling me? " Of course, Courtie's reputation had never been immaculate; but Courtie's wife's protégée — " I mustn't listen to this! "

" I hope you will, please. I have to tell it, this once. I don't want to, but I have to, to explain. After my father's accident, he had to make Holy Confession to the priest, and naturally Father Dimitri wouldn't give him absolution till he'd promised to tell Mrs. Litchfield; but she'd gone, and then he died. Well, the priest's never allowed to tell, but he knew then mother'd known it all along, and he refused her Holy Communion till she told — and she sent me, and I thought, as you were going to marry Mrs. Litchfield, you'd do just as well as she would. I asked Father Dimitri: he said so, too."

John was on his feet. " I haven't an idea." he declared, " what you're driving at." But he was horribly afraid that he did have.

Dora sat there, still tranquil; yet he began to see that her tranquillity was that of one who has found the peace which lies on the other side of tears: she had no tears left. " Why," she said, wide-eyed, " that my father did it."

Felton turned away. — Workmen were putting the finishing-touches to a striped red and white awning in front of the church: it was like that garden-umbrella under which Celeste used to drink her after-luncheon coffee. — " Did what? " He scarcely heard the question.

" Killed Mr. Litchfield."

And now John could scarcely hear her answer. His hands flew to his face.

" My father found a note of mine that I was going to send Mr. Litchfield — and after that, he just waited his chance. But my father was a good man: I don't want it should be thought he wasn't."

A groan from beside the window was the only comment. That sad-eyed millworker — Courtie: Good God!

" Nor I'm not blaming Mr. Litchfield, either," said Dora quietly. " We were both wrong, him and me, especially because we both loved his wife. Of course, I'm sorry for my sin and my baby's death " — she bit her lip — " but I was old enough to know what I was doing — and Mr. Litchfield was never anything except kind to me."

Never anything but kind! Felton recalled that lie — he knew now it was a lie — which linked this girl with Tom Averell and other men. Courtie had been responsible for the invention of those " other men," doubtless to save an innocent Tom, but none the less at the expense of his own victim. John heard himself say:

" You let Mrs. Litchfield think it was young Averell."

" I wouldn't tell on Mr. Litchfield. Even now I don't want her to know that about him, if you can keep that part to yourself. Tom and Justine Dinwiddie said they didn't mind, afterwards: I'd done something for them once."

So Dora asked him to hide one part of this wretched story from Celeste: without informing Dora of his intention, he would conceal it all, forever! Then over him swept the knowledge that he would have to keep the one portion from his wife whether he wanted to or not — he remembered his promise never to bear to her any tale against Courtie.

Somehow, he got himself in hand. He wheeled around — upon a room that had become strange to him.

" See here, you won't mention this anywhere? "

Dora met him calmly:

" Well, hardly! "

"Nor your mother won't?"

"She'd bite her tongue out before she'd make any more talk about me."

"And you're the only two that know?"

"Except Father Dimitri."

"Will he tell?"

"You don't understand about priests: he couldn't."

That settled it: Celeste's feelings need never be harrowed by it. The mystery would remain for her a mystery until the end of time. As for himself, John had no wish to know more — he had a dread of the details.

"There's only one other thing," continued Dora.

"Something else?" Felton hoped never again to hear anybody's secrets.

"Yes — that I think — that Father Dimitri thinks — I ought to tell you."

She raised her face to him: only some firm sense of religious duty, some loyalty to a faith obscure to him, could have brought her here. Tranquil? How could he ever have called it that? It was lovely, but its was the loveliness of a woman who had so suffered — oh, today; but also long before today! — that the last agony would be passed unremarked. He had been selfish not to read her sooner — to think only of Celeste, and himself:

"Tell me anything you want to."

"If you've the time? It won't take long."

"There's plenty of time." There was, but he would almost have said so if there wasn't.

"Then, when I came here to see you that day — perhaps you don't remember — "

"I do," said John.

"Well, when I came here to see you, if you'd been a priest, like I thought — " She was trying, he understood, not to offend him: to help her, he nodded. But you weren't, and

you said you weren't. It wasn't your fault; you just didn't happen to be." Her hands were busy at last; she had found her handkerchief and was rolling it into a ball between them. "Anyway, I joined because Mrs. Litchfield wanted me to. I oughtn't have; but I owed her so much, I wanted to please her."

Felton almost smiled; but tragedy was here: he checked the smile. Had he not, there would, at any rate, have been more in it of pity than of criticism.

"I told you," said Dora, "it was all my own idea: getting regularly into your church, but it was really hers. She didn't tell me to say just that, though, so it was my fault more than hers, and Father Dimitri thought I ought to make you understand it was. So that's all."

"My dear girl, I do understand." Something sent John's mind back to an earlier point. "But surely I said to you that in Episcopalianism you were free to believe in the Real Presence if you wanted to."

She nodded. "Only" — her face was like some Saint's! — "you see, it was this way: I'd come here to join your church for Mrs. Litchfield's sake, but while I was here I began to think about confession, too: I felt I ought to tell you, before I joined, that — what was the matter with me. And right then you said you weren't a priest."

It leaped into Felton's mind that, if she had confessed — if he had let her — even though the confession involved — and it wouldn't — any name, he might somehow have set matters straight. He might have prevented a murder. Absurd, yet he didn't immediately banish the idea:

"It's not only priests who can hear confessions."

"It's only priests who take vows of secrecy," said Dora. It's only priests who give absolution — and that's what confession's for!"

This was nonsense, but he mustn't remark it. Indeed,

something somewhat apart from it occupied him. The limpid eyes looked at him without anger, and yet she seemed somehow to lay a share of what had happened to her at his door! Cameron's condemnation returned to John. All this mummery — all this round-about talk: did it mean that she, too, thought he lacked faith? Cameron: here was still something else to be run down. On a man's wedding-day — but that drunken Scot might be really dangerous.

Felton spoke gently. "I hope you don't think I was in any way to blame."

"You couldn't help not being something you weren't." She got up to go. "Well, my congratulations, Mr. Felton."

He took a quick resolution:

"I want to ask you one question. You've mentioned my not being a priest. Has anybody been telling you I oughtn't to be a minister?"

A faint glow came into her cheeks — a mere hint of pink. "You've been kind to me. Yes. But it wasn't anybody that matters."

"Who was it?"

"Ought I to tell?" She stood by the bookcase now; she touched a random volume.

"I think you ought."

"Well, you know Mr. Cameron that used to be a Presbyterian minister? He's — he's not well, and he's very poor, so mother's given him a bed in our parlor. He was talking to me this morning."

"And what did he say?"

"You won't hurt him?"

"I won't hurt him: I can't!"

She drew that book from the shelf: it was a volume of "The Golden Bough." "Lots of things. He said you didn't believe in the Virgin Birth; but he said it wasn't a question

with you whether the Virgin Birth was true: it was a question whether you were true — and you weren't."

"And then?"

"He said most ministers go into the ministry for every reason except the one right one, and he said that was 'a full and burning faith.' He said they were anti-Christian — he called them 'half-conscious Judases.'" She shivered. "He said they didn't believe in their Lord, but that they sold Him at every service for thirty pieces of silver. He said some fail one way and some another, but he did say you were like them all because what was the matter with them all was that they didn't really believe."

John frowned, — from concentration. "Had he — it was morning, you say, but had he been drinking?"

"No — not then." Her eyes were eyes of pity, and yet of horror, too. "I think he's sick." She touched her head, and next, with trembling hand, thrice crossed herself from right to left.

"What else?"

"Just that sort of thing. Please don't think I didn't stand up for you, Mr. Felton." She returned that volume to its place on the shelf; she gave him bovine eyes of appeal. "He was our guest, and we near-East people have our rules about that; but I did stand up for you — really. I said if you'd lost your faith, you'd get out of your Church the way he got out of his."

"What did" — Felton cleared his throat. — "what did Cameron say to that?"

"He said you hadn't lost it, because you never had any to lose. Oh" — she extended her hands, one of them holding that ball of a handkerchief — "I wouldn't let him talk any more against you. Truly, I said I was sure he was all wrong!"

Like a *chien-loup* that has been thrown into a sewer and

worked his way out, John shook himself — vainly. "Miss — I mean Dora — there was something about a job for you. If there's anything I can do — "

Dora's face was illuminated. "I want my old job back. Not for myself. But after all she did for me, and for my mother — and after all I did against her — I want to give her all the work I've got to give. Do you think I can get my old job back, Mr. Felton? "

"I know you can! " said John.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

§ 1

CAMERON had remembered! Remembered and persisted. He had been more or less like this, when closeted with John, for ever so long. But now — Until now Felton had never realized half of what a Cameron thus malignantly active could mean.

John was alone — sat at his desk.

The typewriter —

Tennis-racquet and golf-bags —

Books —

Alice — No, Celeste!

Quiet outside.

This noise was in his head.

His mother —

He rang for Sally.

§ 2

"There's still some of that brandy left?"

"Why, yes, sir, if you — "

"Please. Just a little."

"Well, Mr. Felton, I've never yet been married myself, but I've always heard say that when folks was goin' to be they got nervous an' needed somethin', an' I recollect as if it was yesterday when my brother — he's been dead these — "

"Please, Sally."

§ 3

This Cameron gossip. It was only a drunkard's. Even if it was spreading, it would spread merely through the mill-district. It couldn't hurt him, Felton.

Yes, it could, though — it did. It hurt him in the vital spot of his recovered power to persuade others even when he did not himself believe.

The accusation was true, and that was bad enough: he saw now in all its hideousness the quality of his policy of delay. He recalled Dinwiddie — his own ordination; he had had faith then, for a minute. But essentially Cameron was right: save for that once, Felton had never had it; he hadn't, as he'd most of this while assumed, lost it: it had just been a dead thing entombed behind his brain. Yes, when he first awoke to himself, he thought he had been unconsciously doubting for years. Now that Russian-Greek Girl, by her quotations from Cameron, had made him realize that he had never really believed: except for those perhaps sixty seconds during his ordination, he had always only acquiesced.

Intellectually dishonest: that was what was the matter with him. (He wouldn't drink this brandy: he threw it on the rug.) Or not exactly that: he had been intellectually lazy. Cameron must be wrong as to the majority of cases: it wasn't that ministers studied critics and were persuaded by them; it was that the bulk of ministers in every sect where there were ministers didn't use their minds one way or the other. Not intellectual error so much as intellectual torpor. They disbelieved, but they couldn't say why — most of them. And so, it followed, the congregations they were supposed to teach couldn't say what they believed — most of them. Well, he hadn't believed, either; yet he had proposed to stick here for a year — two years — reciting creeds — administering communion . . .

Truly bad enough, all this. Yet he could have stood it. It wasn't the worst: the worst was that, since he had set out to be a liar, he'd failed to conceal his duplicity in those quarters where he had hoped his future work would be. It spelled ruin: how could he — despite one mild success — expect ever to persuade men in visible bread-and-butter relations if he couldn't convince them regarding his own faith in things unseen? He was a topic for smiling scandal at the mills — a convicted falsehood-teller in the chancel who now proposed to embark upon a course of deception among the workers. For they would believe Cameron; he was just the kind of man they would believe . . .

Only this morning, John had been laughing. He wondered if he would ever laugh again. He felt like praying for the end of all things . . .

Nevertheless, the instinct of self-preservation stirred — leaped. Was there, he hopelessly asked himself, any baser instinct? This situation had to be ended. Something or other had to happen — this way or that. There had always been some way 'round:

They would believe Cameron — if Cameron were given time. — Then why give him it?

Perhaps Felton might yet beat in the race; perhaps if he left the Church quickly enough, before this thing spread —

Delicacy must be choked — and at once. Celeste already knew — had already vehemently and gratefully acknowledged his executive ability — and she loved him as well as he loved her. Well, then, he must tell Celeste of his unbelief, remind her of his remaining talents, call upon her immediate help — and then leave the ministry today — the minute the wedding was over — regardless of what anybody except her employees — who would thus be silenced — might say.

He rang again for Sally. He wouldn't any longer endure

this false servitude. "Half-unconscious Judases!" He'd see. He could always depend on Celeste.

§ 4

Felton looked at his watch.

Still time to spare.

"Sally," said he, "call a taxi."

"But, Mr. Felton — "

"Call a taxi! " . . .

§ 5

The maid at Celeste's — that capped and aproned maid whom he knew so well by sight, and who remained otherwise a nervous mystery to him, stared.

"Why, sir — "

"I must see Mrs. Litchfield! "

He strode into the square hall. Then he realized that he hadn't the remotest idea where, among all the rooms upstairs Celeste's was situated. While he hesitated, Mrs. Averell — in the undeniable character of Marie Antoinette descended, warned by that maid:

"Dear Mr. Felton, you're too impetuous! Don't you know it's bad luck for the groom to see the bride on the wedding-day, till he meets her at the altar? "

"Where's her room? " . . .

§ 6

Celeste turned from the pier-glass, where the now too-frightened-to-reenter Mrs. Averell, as Mistress-of-the-robes, had left her. She was quite ready as far as he could see — in white, and pearls drooped from her black hair over her

low and dusky forehead. He had yet to observe her more beautiful.

"Go away! What are you doing here?"

The morning sun — that glad sun of a clear autumnal day — poured into the chintz-decorated room. Around Celeste it formed a glory.

"I've got to see you," said John. Now he knew it was mad of him not to have waited until after the wedding — but now he knew it was too late. "Got to."

Then she really looked at him, and, as she looked, he saw, over her shoulders and head, his reflection in the pier-glass.

"What's," she asked, with puzzled brows, "the matter with you?"

"Why?" he countered — but he saw himself in that glass.

"It's all gone — your happy look. And I was just so happy: I've just got a perfectly lovely cablegram of congratulations from Alice Averell. — John, what's happened?"

Somebody tapped at the boudoir-door.

§ 7

Mrs. Averell.

Celeste had arranged that the house should be in telephone communication with the church, via Zeller, sexton. News of the Bishop had supplied the Judge's wife with courage:

"The Bishop's nearly vested!"

Celeste was quite clearly about to stamp her pearl-embroidered shoes, and Felton knew that when Celeste stamped there was likely to ensue a scene. He hurried to the Mistress-of-the-robes:

"That's all right, Mrs. Averell. We've got fifteen minutes yet — and there'll never have been a handsomer matron-of-honor in St. John's! "

He dared to kiss her cheek.

" You know," she archly whispered, " I did think once you and Alice — However, perhaps I'd better not mention that — "

§ 8

Down at St. John's, the organist began to improvise in a key that could blend nicely into the Lohengrin wedding-march, while all who were not in the best pews grumbled at all who were, and at the ushers, of whom each displayed a pearl stick-pin given at dinner by John the night before.

" It is pretty soft for Felton," said usher Weir.

" Oh, well," said usher Ivins, rubbing his hands together, " I'm told she has a temper."

§ 9

Back in the vestry-room best-man Ernest Grigg waited impatiently with tottering Bishop Meeker, who clutched Zeller's arm, with bony fingers from one of which the amethyst *en cabochon* was slipping. Grigg wore a new cutaway from London and, as for that matter did Ikey Rosenbaum and those other ushers in the body of the church, sported hot-house lilies-of-the-valley, Celeste's chosen flower.

The lawn-sleeved Bishop, however, wasn't at all impatient: he had been at so many weddings that he could even have suffered some tardiness now without feeling any affront to his position. " *Ecclesia est in episcopo*," perhaps, but certainly there can be no marriage without both bride and groom. He gazed good-naturedly down his nose. He liked weddings; he had always liked Celeste; she had recently,

chiefly by her engagement, ended his dislike for Felton and revived his old fondness for that one of his clergymen:

"They tell me he's now doing very well indeed." Meeker's voice was thin and aged; his cheeks were like white parchment on which a wandering pen has scrawled lines in red ink. "I always knew his fundamental faith would pull him through to success — with a little supervision, to be sure." After more than two years' total abstinence from negro-anecdotes, the Bishop now recalled and related — quite well — one that he considered apposite.

Thus at St. John's.

§ 10

Out at the garish onion-turreted church on the edge of town, where the fields began, there was being said a service, for today was the name-day of one of its communicants who had for some time been distant both from her faith and from Doncaster. Incense and candles and, in spite of all the tawdryness, the authentic atmosphere of mystery.

It was the day of the Martyr Menodora, and up by the ikonostasis a girl stood, in full view of the congregation. Face to face with Father Dimitri she had made her whispered confession, and now he laid on her bowed head his stole and made the sign of the Cross above it:

> "O Lord, the God of our Salvation, Who art full of mercy, compassion and long-suffering, Who art grieved at our calamities, and Who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live . . . show Thy mercy . . . pardoning her every transgression whether committed voluntarily or involuntarily. Reconcile and unite her to Thy Holy Church. . . .

"May our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, through the grace and compassion of His exceeding Love, forgive thee, my daughter Menodora, all thy transgressions: and I, an unworthy priest, by the power that is given unto me by Him, forgive and absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

Dora Zalokostas was come home.

§ 11

"'What's happened?'" repeated John, as he closed Celeste's boudoir-door upon a tittering Mrs. Averell, and leaned against it, breathing hard. He felt his heart turn over: it was now or never. "Something that — " He hadn't rehearsed this; all his recently recaptured power over words seemed gone again. Was it gone, this time, forever? "Celeste," he cried — his round face was convulsed — he looked twice his age — "I don't believe any more. I've shown you I can work with you. Well, I've got to get out of the ministry — "

She had taken up a silver-backed brush from her dressing-table to give the final touch — since he rudely wouldn't let her maid in or let the Judge's wife remain here — to her glossy hair. She didn't drop that brush now; she laid it back in its place on the tray, very carefully. Then, with her square chin up, her dark brows contracted — with genuine color under her saffron cheeks and her breasts heaving under her bridal dress, she came toward him.

"Believe? What's that got to do with it? Didn't we both say we'd broadened? Courtie was as good a lawyer, if he'd only had half a chance, as there was at the Doncaster County bar, but that didn't mean he believed in every little

law that was passed — the Volstead Law, for instance. (Please don't pull at your collar that way: it'll be a sight, in church!) From a thing you started to say the other day I knew there was something of this kind on your brain — I just knew it! Believe? Of course you believe — enough. You can if you try: anybody can. Look here" — she stopped in her advance and tapped, chin up, her chest — "get this and quit Ritzing: if ever — ever! — you leave the Church, I'll leave you — and then where'll you be?"

Her right arm swept downward, its beringed magenta-tipped fingers at an acute angle.

"Celeste —"

She passed to tenderness, drawing yet more near:

"Why, listen, honey." Her voice was low and throaty. "I've got a surprise for you. That's the only reason I sent you to Martinique: so's I could work it up, and I've got it all set. If you're a Bishop, nobody can talk about what you believe, or what you don't — can they? Well, you're going to be a Bishop! You know in our Church, when there's to be an Assistant-Bishop, the Bishop nominates him, and the diocese elects him — and then he succeeds the full Bishop when the full Bishop dies. Well, I've fixed that here, while you were away — all of it — and it's going through right off. It's my wedding-present to you — and to me, too: I'm going to be the wife of a Bishop." She was close — she was closer. "Your election and consecration will be my wedding-present."

Her bare arms closed around Felton. Her crimson mouth found his.

Quickly then she drew away.

"Have you got the ring? — Let me see it! — Husbands always forget the ring, and we don't want any hold-up to our wedding. — Now, it'll never do for you to ride down with good old Mrs. Averell and me. As soon as I heard

you were here, I ordered the touring-car for you. There's a coat in it: you won't get dusty."

She did love him. Once again she kissed him.

"Now, for Heaven's sake, hurry!"

(The End.)

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